

SOLDIERS AND TRIBESMEN:

THE ROMAN ARMY AND TRIBAL SOCIETY IN LATE IMPERIAL AFRICA

Alan Rushworth

VOLUME I

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Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU

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To Mum, Dad and Martin.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with two groups which guarded North Africa's frontiers during the Later Roman Empire, firstly the regular army, and secondly, the *gentiles*, or tribesmen.

The subject is introduced in Chapter I, and the academic debate on this subject summarised. In Chapter II, the continued existence of a garrison of regular soldiers, in the fourth century sector commands (*limites*), is demonstrated. The present consensus regarding the manning of the *limites* would assign a much larger role to some kind of tribal militia. The actual role of the Moorish and Libyan tribes in frontier defence is analysed in the next chapter. They are seen to be essentially an adjunct to the *limitanei* rather than a replacement for them. The long involvement of African tribesmen in the military service of Rome is traced in Chapter IV. The field army is examined in Chapter V. A pattern of steady growth is discerned, gradually supplanting the *limitanei*.

In Chapters VI and VII attention is focussed once more on the frontier troops. The location of the *limites* listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and their internal organisation are analysed in Chapter VI. Chapter VII studies the duties of the *limitanei*. The essentially policing nature of their work is stressed. Finally, two cases of extensive tribal integration are studied and some comments made on the relations between the imperial administration and the tribal aristocracy. In conclusion, it is noted that soldiers and tribesmen did not occupy two separate worlds, a Romanised Africa and an *Afrique oubliée*. On the contrary they were often one and the same, as soldiers were probably recruited from amongst tribesmen, and formed part of a single frontier society.

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I must first of all thank my supervisor, Charles Daniels, for his constant interest and sympathetic support. This thesis owes much to his detailed knowledge of the African frontier zone and its sites. I have also benefitted from discussion, over more years than I care to admit, with postgraduates, research fellows and staff in the Department of Archaeology at Newcastle University. In particular, I must thank John Dore, for going through his latest thoughts on the dating of the pottery from the Tripolitanian frontier zone and being ever ready to discuss matters North African, Rob Burns and Derek Welsby, for information on *gsur* and the Tripolitanian frontier zone, and Isabella Sjornstrom for an insight into Early Medieval Tripolitania. Neil Christie read through a first draft of the chapters on *gentiles* and tribal society. Richard Willis and Jim Anderson typed some of the bibliography. I have always found the postgraduate annexe of the Department a fruitful place for research and must credit all its members, notably, Dave Boyson, Richard Carlton, Nick Hodgson, Frances Mawer and Jon Coulston, all of whom have had a formative influence on work. Naturally, any errors remain my own.

The first three years of this study were funded by a British Academy Grant. I also received travel grants to Algeria and Tunisia from the same source and from the Tessa and Mortimer Wheeler Fund. Pierre Salama supplied valuable information on the frontier of Mauretania Caesariensis. The Bodleian Library has given its kind permission to reproduce some pages from the *Notitia Dignitatum* (MS. Canon. Misc. 378, Fols. 151v, 156r, 157r), as has Charles Daniels with regard to permission to reproduce figures 10.17 and 10.19 from his 1987 article, *North Africa*. My brother, Martin, accompanied me during my fieldwork in Tunisia, at a time of political upheaval for that country. Umit Kizmaz and Katja Werbach heroically went through large chunks of German text with me, simply on the basis of friendship. Margaret Finch worked on the maps with divine patience in the face of my vague instructions and contradictory requests. John Law in Newcastle University Computing Service provided much helpful advice. Finally, I must also thank all those friends who kept asking 'how's the thesis Alan?' and above all my parents and brother for their unfailing support and encouragement.

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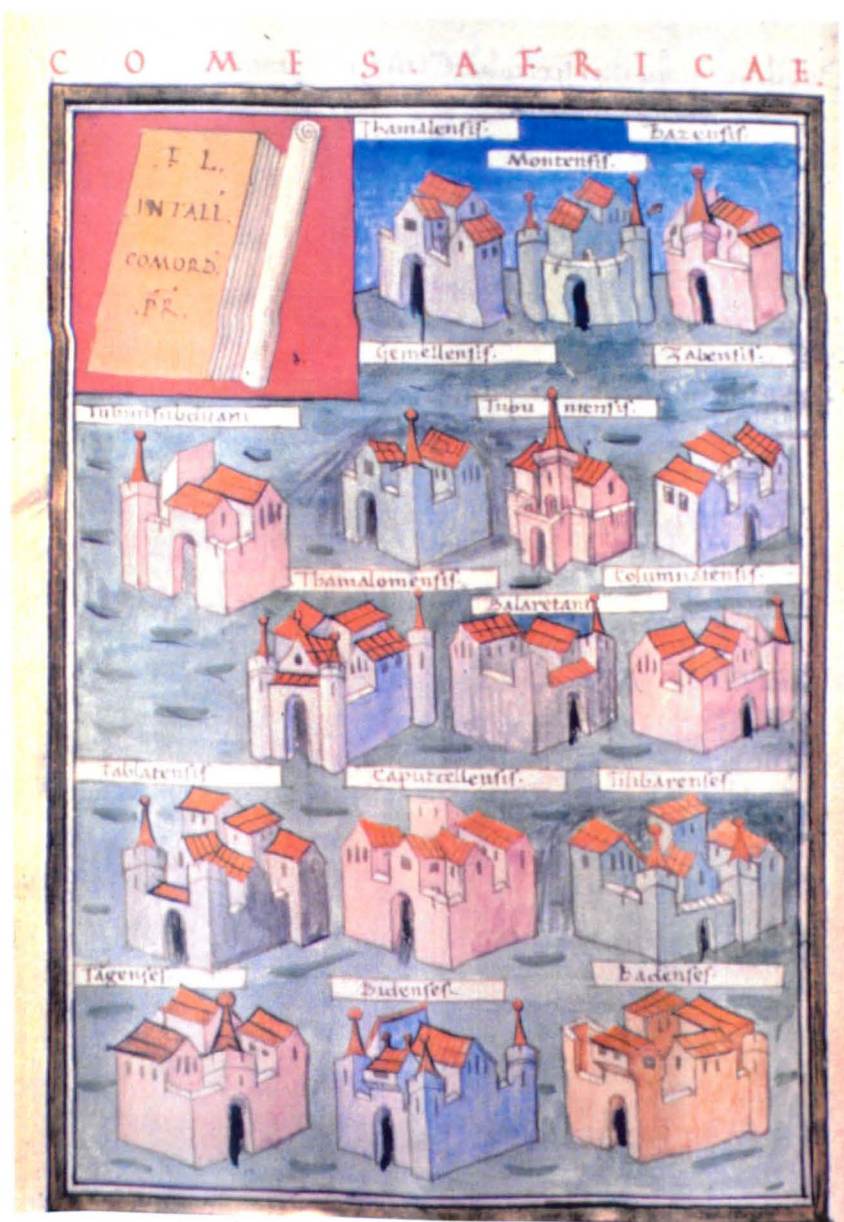
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NOTE ON PLACENAMES

I have not attempted to attempted to achieve a consistant transliteration of modern Maghrebi placenames. I have followed the usage currently followed in each country. Thus a glance at a recent Michelin map will show that whereas the Algerians have retained the old French transliteration of Djebel (Mountain), the Tunisians have simplified it to Jebel, and the Moroccans to Jbel (thereby providing a useful guide to the location of the undefined Algero-Moroccan border!). In Libya, Gebel, deriving from the Italian transliteration has prevailed, and is generally adopted by English scholars who have worked in that country. Similarly I have used Oued in the former French Maghreb and Wadi in Libya; likewise Ksar and Gasr. It seems preferable to be able find sites with ease, both in the literature and on maps, and it does at least provide a handy shorthand guide as to what part of the Maghreb a given site is located. In the case of two natural features, which straddle the Tuniso-Libyan border, namely the Jeffara plain and the Jebel mountain range, I have adopted the Franco-Tunisian form, since I consider that, paradoxically, it renders the relevant sounds in English with the least ambiguity.

I have italicised ancient, Latinised placenames. Greek forms have been transliterated and both italicised and underlined.



Sub dispositione viri spectabilis comitis Africae

(Bodleian MS. Canon. Misc. 378 Fol. 151v.)

CHAPTER I

LIMITANEI AND GENTILES

I.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is concerned with the frontier zone of Roman Africa during the Late Imperial era. In particular, using archaeological, literary and epigraphic evidence, it sets out to analyse the specific roles and mutual interaction of two groups involved with the security of that region. These comprise, on the one hand the regular army, notably the frontier troops or *limitanei*, and on the other the Berber tribes, which formed a prominent element of the local population. In examining these two elements of Romano-African society the study perforce explores the nature of the 'frontier' itself and the function of attendant military installations. It is hoped that this may benefit not only the study of Roman frontiers in other arid, pre-desert or mountainous environments but also, more generally, research into relations between complex states and peripheral tribal societies.

Temporally, the study covers the late third to early/mid fifth centuries, whilst geographically it embraces the late imperial diocese of Africa, an area covering most of the present day Algerian Tell, Tunisia and Libyan Tripolitania. However useful comparable data from neighbouring Cyrenaica and Mauretania Tingitana is not ignored, neither is relevant information deriving from the Africa of the Principate and the Byzantine era.¹

I.2 SOLDIERS, TRIBESMEN AND FRONTIER DEFENCE

I.2.1 The Questions Outlined

The questions concerned here may be summarised as follows: who guarded the African frontier? Was it a force of regular soldiers, or alternatively some kind of militia composed of Berber tribesmen or 'soldier-farmers', or perhaps a combination of regular troops and militiamen? If the latter was the case what were the respective contributions of the two different forces? What, furthermore, was the precise form of the militia force and how did it operate?

It is nearly 30 years since the general concept of the Late Roman soldier-farmer or peasant militiaman was demolished by A.H.M. Jones. To understand why these questions should still pose such problems with regard to the North African frontier, it is first necessary to examine the long and complex historiographical development of the idea that that frontier zone in particular was garrisoned by some sort of militia.

1. Cyrenaica was a separate province during the Later Empire titled variously Libya Superior or Libya Pentapolis. It formed part of the Oriental, and later the Egyptian, diocese. Mauretania Tingitana was assigned to the Spanish diocese.

1.2.2 A History of the Problem

The traditional view of the Late Imperial frontier garrison - no matter which frontier - was of a hereditary caste of soldier-farmers, little more than a peasant militia and a mere shadow of the mighty army of the Principate from which they were descended. The development of this myth can be traced through the literature as far back as Mommsen. Over the years it steadily grew in strength as each scholarly tome added further academic assumption and argument.

The evidence on which the concept of the soldier-farmer was based was however exceedingly slender. There is no indication from the law codes that soldiers were engaged in farming during their term of service until the early fifth century, and none whatsoever from the Western Empire. The whole edifice rested ultimately on a single ancient source the Life of Severus Alexander in the *Historia Augusta*. Perhaps the most powerful factor weighing in support of the peasant militiamen was the general assumption that the frontier troops of the dark and decaying Late Empire must have represented a poor and debased force when compared to their glorious forebears.²

A few lone voices, notably Mazzarino (1951, 330-340) and Seston (1955, 286-291), pointed out the fundamental problems in using the *Historia Augusta* as a historical source (especially the Life of Severus Alexander) and hence the fragility of the whole notion of the soldier-farmer, but to no avail. Right up to the 1960's the traditional interpretation held virtually undisputed sway. Van Berchem's *L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme Constantinienne*, published in 1952, and Macmullen's *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (1963), both influential works, give considerable prominence to the soldier-farmers.³

In the same period, archaeological research in the North African frontier zone itself, appeared to confirm the conventional view of *limitanei*. It was tempting to associate the latter with the extensive traces of agriculture identified alongside the 'fossatum' by Baradez (1949). Still more important, perhaps, was the fieldwork conducted by Goodchild in Tripolitania. Goodchild discussed the numerous tower-like structures, known as *gsur*, which were scattered throughout the Tripolitanian Jebel and pre-desert. These seemed to have a defensive function, and were certainly defensible, but were also associated with agricultural systems in the neighbouring wadis. Consequently they were clearly, in most cases at any rate, settlements rather than purely military fortlets. To

2. SHA, *vita Severi Alexandri*, XVIII, 58: Severus Alexander

gave lands captured from the enemy to the *duces* and soldiers of the frontier districts, on condition that they should be theirs if their heirs served in the army and should never belong to private persons, saying that they would serve with greater zeal if they were also defending their own fields. He also gave them animals and slaves, so that they could cultivate what they had received, to prevent the country near the barbarian zone being deserted through lack of men or through the advanced age of its owners.

3. See Isaac 1988, 139, for a summary of the scholarly literature on the subject.

further cloud the issue the term *centenaria* is used to denote *gsur*, both in certain official imperial building inscriptions and in some Latino-Punic private dedications. Goodchild argued that the *gsur* belonged to a planned system, laid out by military engineers and begun under Severus Alexander, whereby soldiers or veterans were settled in the Tripolitanian frontier zone. His theory was based on the passage of the *Historia Augusta* discussed above and the one or two cases where imperial building inscriptions irrefutably demonstrated a military function for a particular *gsur*, such as Gasr Duib. The descendants of the initial military settlers then formed a hereditary militia, bound to defend the frontier if they were to retain tenure of their landholdings. They were commanded by officers known as *centenarii* and *praepositi limitum*, as indicated by the *Notitia Dignitatum* and the the Gasr Duib inscription.⁴

It was A.H.M. Jones in his monumental work *The Later Roman Empire* who was to succeed in overturning the *limitanei* = peasant militia theory. By careful analysis of all reliable source material - in particular the Theodosian Code - he was able to demonstrate conclusively that the frontier troops were regular soldiers, just like those serving in the field armies. During the fourth century their terms and conditions were very similar to those of the *comitatenses*. The fiscal privileges of the latter were admittedly somewhat greater but the essential point was that both forces were paid, supplied and equipped by the state. Furthermore all branches of the army were theoretically hereditary, not just the *limitanei*.⁵

Initially there was little to distinguish little difference in the calibre of troops in the two branches. Detachments from legions stationed on the frontier are regularly drafted into the field armies throughout the fourth century, as the names of many of the *legiones comitatenses* testify. Conversely troops drawn from field army regiments were used to replenish frontier provinces where invasion had caused extensive disruption to the previous garrison. This practice seems particularly common in the West under Valentinian to judge from the evidence of unit nomenclature preserved in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.⁶

A difference in quality did inevitably emerge as the field army regiments, benefiting from their proximity to the emperor

4. Goodchild and Ward-Perkins 1949 and Goodchild 1950 were the two seminal articles; Gasr Duib: IRT 880 = AE 1950, 128. Cf. Mattingly 1984, 251-252 for a useful summary of Goodchild's theory and the role of *gsur*. It is now clear that Goodchild conflated many disparate elements. In particular, he merged 2 separate types of structure, a small number of purely military *gsur*, which functioned as police stations in the frontier zone, and the defensible towers erected by the local civilian population of the pre-desert from the third century onwards. Given that the two types are architecturally virtually indistinguishable this was perhaps not surprising. Another example, this time at a much more detailed level is furnished by the *centenarii*. These are associated with the new style, high status, units of the Late Roman army; they were thus unlikely to be encountered amongst a frontier militia.

5. Jones' work first appeared in 1964 as 3 volumes. A second edition, in 2 volumes with different pagination for the notes at the end, appeared in 1973. The references given here, following the abbreviation *LRE*, are to the second edition.

6. See Hoffmann 1969, 333-358; 1974.

or the senior military commanders, received the best recruits and officers, were more likely to obtain redress against abuses, and thus to receive their pay and supplies on time and the proper allocation of clothing, equipment and remounts. Nevertheless this divergence was a slow process. Even the term *limitanei* does not appear until 363. It was coined simply as a legal term to distinguish the bulk of the army from the *comitatenses*.⁷

The first mention of soldiers farming land near forts in Eastern Empire doesn't appear until early fifth century and even then there is no evidence that the practice was universal. There is no evidence whatsoever for the practice in the Western Empire, where units of *limitanei* were at this time being trawled *en masse* into the field army, especially in Gaul, to reinforce its depleted forces. Even as late as the end of the sixth century *limitanei* can still occasionally be detected playing an active role in military campaigns and occasionally distinguishing themselves by acts of outstanding bravery.⁸

It was a remarkable piece of scholarship to cut through such a massive edifice of circular and inadequate argument. However it is disturbing to see how often scholars still cling to the old concept - so much so that one historian has recently found it necessary to restate and supplement Jones' arguments.⁹

Nevertheless Jones was impressed by the archaeological evidence from North Africa, assembled by Baradez and Goodchild. So much so that he argued that the African frontier zone was indeed defended by a militia but one based on local Moorish and Libyan tribes (*gentiles*), rather than soldier-farmers.¹⁰

The argument was not just reliant on archaeological material. A significant body of legal and literary evidence demonstrated the continued existence, in Later Roman Africa, of tribal communities supervised by *praefecti gentium*. The most notable source was a law of 409 - *CTh VII xv 1* - which

7. Jones *LRE*, 649-654 & 1270-1272 for full references to the primary sources. The first mention of the term *limitanei* occurs in the law *CTh XII, i, 56*.

8. Cf. Isaac 1988, 145 and 1990, 210-211, citing operations by 6th century *duces* on the Eastern Frontier, but his contention that *duces* only commanded *limitanei* should be rejected (Jones *LRE* 660-661 assembles evidence for the stationing of *comitatenses* in ducal commands during the 5th-6th centuries). Jones *LRE* 661 notes the *legio IV Parthica* distinguished itself in action at Beroea under Maurice. The *Asemountioi*, the garrison of Asemus on the lower Danube who repeatedly repulsed the forces of Attila in the 440's, were almost certainly a unit of *limitanei*; see Crow 1981, 46.

9. Isaac 1988, 139-47 is a very useful resume of evidence; p 139, nn.64-65 for failure of modern scholars to fully absorb implications of Jones' work.

For analysis of the *Historia Augusta* see Syme 1968 and 1971. Cf. Rouge 1966 for a valuable case-study examining the work's treatment of events in Isauria.

10. Jones *LRE*, 651-653 & 1271. On page 1271 n.103 Jones cites Baradez' work *Fossatum Africae* (1949). He was presumably also aware of the theories developed by Goodchild since he later contributed to Gadallah (ed.) *Libya in History*, 1971, 289-298, where he outlined his views on frontier defence in relation to the contrasting examples of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. See esp. p.294 where he indicates his awareness of the archaeological evidence.

seemed to allude to the participation of these *gentiles* in the defence of the frontier zone, although their precise role - '*curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati*' - was obscured by the typically rhetorical language of the leg-islation. This was supplemented by other laws of the Theodosian Code, the letters of St Augustine and the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus. The distinctive command structure displayed by the three African chapters in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (ND Occ. XXV, XXX and XXXI), with their lists of frontier sector commanders - *praepositi limitum* - instead of normal regimental officers, apparently confirmed the militarily anomalous character of the region. Jones interpreted the *praepositi limitum* as local officers in charge of the tribal militiamen.

Well outlined, this suggestion steadily gained acceptance amongst scholars specialising in the study of the North African frontier, even if many of the details of how the system might have evolved and worked remained vague. It seemed to explain in a satisfactory manner why dense networks of fortified farms were not present on other frontiers. Thus the memorial volume collecting together Goodchild's articles on Libyan archaeology after his death duly notes that scholar's own acceptance that the label *limitanei* should be replaced by *gentiles* when describing the inhabitants of the *gsur*.¹¹

However, more recent research has tended to cloud the issue. In some respects Jones' case has been strengthened. The work of the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey (ULVS) teams, for example, has confirmed the essentially local nature of *gsur* and their inhabitants. Such pre-desert settlement can no longer be regarded as the brainchild of Roman engineers, implemented for the benefit of veteran soldier-farmers. Rather it was the creation of an indigenous society, exploiting the conditions created by Roman rule. However other research has begun to cast doubt on some aspects of his concept.¹²

Firstly, it is clear from the work of Leveau and Lepelley that the *praefecti gentium* were not part of the same hierarchy as the *praepositi limitum*, *tribuni* and *decurioni* recorded exercising command in the frontier zone. *Praefecti gentium* were administrators charged with supervising one or more tribes, and, during the Later Empire, were drawn from the ranks of the local tribal nobility itself. *Praepositi limitum*, on the other hand, were clearly local military officers. Secondly, the '*decurioni qui limitis praest, vel tribuno*', mentioned by a correspondant of St Augustine's, were almost certainly synonymous with the *praepositi* rather than being subordinates of the latter.¹³

11. *Libyan Studies* 1976, 1, where the editor Joyce Reynolds incorporates Jones' ideas. Note also Olwen Brogan's comments recorded in response to Jones' paper in Gadallah (ed.) 1971, at p.298.

12. The Anglo-Libyan component of ULVS is published in successive volumes of *Libyan Studies*. The ULVS view of *gsur* inhabitants is most clearly expressed in Buck, Burns and Mattingly 1983, 42-54, and further developed by Mattingly 1987 and 1989.

For the corresponding Franco-Libyan work see Rebuffat 1982A, Reddé 1985 and esp. Reddé 1988, with stimulating overview by Rebuffat 1988.

13. For *praefecti gentium* see Leveau 1973, 175-186; and Lepelley 1974.

Further, Brennan (1972, 369) has stressed that the rubric '*limitanei*', heading the list of *praepositi limitum* in the *comes Africae Notitia* chapter (ND Occ. XXV 20) must signify that the *praepositi* commanded regular troops. This, he cogently argued, applied not only to the officers of the African *limes* but also to their Mauretanian and Tripolitanian counterparts. Matthews (1976, 172-174) similarly considered the *limites* were manned by regular *limitanei*. For Mattingly, in his study of the Tripolitanian province (1984, 219 & 250-251), the '*limitanei*' heading demonstrated that only *praepositi* of the *comes Africae* had charge of regular soldiers. He thus acknowledged the likely military presence but conceived it as much reduced in scale, compared with the garrison of the Principate, particularly in Tripolitania and Caesariensis where the *comes* was responsible for only a small proportion of the *limites*. On more general grounds, Rebuffat (1977, 411-414) too has argued strongly that the army was still stationed in the frontier zone. By contrast, as far as Jones was concerned the only *limitanei* in the entire African diocese were two units of *milites* under the authority of the *dux Tripolitanae*.¹⁴

This and other evidence for the continued presence of a significant body of regular troops in the North African frontier zone is fully assessed in Chapter II. Nevertheless, despite the rediscovery *limitanei* in the region, the military, or para-military, role of the *gentiles* cannot be dismissed out of hand. Matthews' in his stimulating 1976 paper on the tribal society and frontier defence in Mauretania Caesariensis, as portrayed by Ammianus and the *Notitia*, has emphasised that:

the *limes* structure, as we see it in the *Notitia Dignitatum* depended entirely on the cooperation and participation of the native princes in order to function at all.

Mattingly (1987, 85-88) has echoed this view, with regard to the *limes Tripolitanus*.¹⁵

Further, both scholars have sought to define the more precisely the form of tribal involvement in frontier defence. Mattingly has expressed it thus:

It is reasonable hypothesis that at neither Bir ed Dreder/Bir Scedua nor Ghirza were the *gsur* dwellers recruited *stricto sensu* as "soldier farmers" or militia but that Rome was recognising and exploiting the relative autonomy and local political dominance of sub-tribal groups. The closest parallels come from Mauretania Sitifensis and Caesariensis, where the great landowners in the frontier zone (who were also tribal leaders) were delegated frontier control as in the documented case of Sannac.

and again:

There were few regular troops left in the (Mauretania) and the Moorish chiefs evidently arranged treaties and provided a certain amount of local policing centred on their impressive fortified farmhouses. Just as in Tripolitania, the frontier zone came to be dominated by an elite group whose power was based on traditional tribal ties, on their position as the major landholders in the region and on official Roman support for them. In both these regions the official garrison was depleted in the fourth century, with field army bases being too remote to provide preclusive

Aug. Ep. 46: *decurioni qui limiti praeest vel tribuno, tribunum qui limiti praeest.*

14. See section II.4 for detailed discussion of this evidence. See also Whitakker 1978, 352.

15. For Mauretania see also Salama 1954, 223-226; Matthews 1971 and 1989, 367-376.

defence. The partial solution to the renewed problems of frontier defence lay in the recruitment of some of the pro-Roman elite who controlled the renewed tribalism of these zones.

The suggestion that security in the Mauretania and Tripolitania was largely entrusted to the local tribal nobility accords well with Mattingly's interpretation of the *limitanei* rubric in the *Notitia*, noted above. He felt the latter showed that only a small proportion of the Later Roman *limites* in Tripolitania and Caesariensis were manned by regular troops under the command of career officers. It is not so clear how it would conform with Brennan's more convincing argument that all the *limites* were manned by regular troops.

Mattingly goes further, considering that the extensive involvement of local tribes in frontier defence must denote the progressive erosion of imperial authority, leading to the eventual secession of the Tripolitanian frontier zone and/or its absorption by the emergent Laguatan confederation. These opinions are not universally held. Rebuffat (1969, 193) has strongly expressed a contrary view. The Vandal conquest and subsequent lax authority are an obvious alternative candidates to initiate a process of 'secession'.

I.2.3 Summary

It is clear that Jones' theory is in need of re-examination in order to resolve these conflicting arguments and clarify who exactly was responsible for frontier defence. Determining whether regular *limitanei* were present, and if so in what sort of strength, and defining the relationship between the Berber tribal communities and the Roman imperial state, are fundamental to any understanding of the African frontier zone in Late Antiquity. They involve many of the central themes in the historiography of Roman North Africa, notably relations between the Roman State and nomadic pastoralists, the purpose and indeed the very concept of frontier lines, and 'La resistance', the idea that there was permanent African hostility towards Imperial rule, particularly amongst the tribal populations of the Mauretanian mountain ranges and the nomadic peoples of the pre-desert and steppe - 'L'Afrique oubliée'. These questions may be addressed by undertaking a detailed re-examination of the literary and documentary evidence, setting it alongside the regional epigraphic corpus, and the structural remains from the frontier districts.¹⁶

16. The imperial government and the nomads: Troussset 1980A, 1984B, Rebuffat 1977, and Daniels 1987, rejecting the earlier expulsion and exclusion theories of Gsell 1926, Leschi 1942 = 1957, 65-74 and Rachet 1970; and see Chapter VII.

For conflicting views on Roman 'frontier lines' see Mann 1974, Luttwak 1976, and Isaac 1990. For African frontiers cf. Troussset 1980A, 1984A, 1986A, Euzennat 1983, Rebuffat 1977, 1979, 1982B, and Daniels 1987. For a full bibliographies on 'La Resistance' see Euzennat 1984, 372-373 and 1986, 582.

Supporters of the concept include Rachet 1970, Benabou 1976 (the most influential account), Sigman 1977, Benseddik 1982, 145-162; it forms a constant theme running through Leveau's work.

Against: Rebuffat 1974B, Speidel 1975B, Février 1981A and 1981B, Frezouls 1980 and 1981, Daniels 1987, 235-236, pointing to the small size of the regional army, in comparison to that deployed on other frontiers, as a sure indication that few problems were envisaged by Rome.

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF THE FRONTIER ARMY

Between 289-293 the governor Aurelius Litua campaigned widely throughout Mauretania Caesariensis. To do so he must have had a substantial military force at his disposal. Furthermore, that force did not simply comprise bands of tribal auxiliaries. On the contrary Litua celebrates his successful, and safe, return to Caesarea, '*cum omnibus militibus d(ominis) n(ostris) Diocletiani et Maximiani Augg(ustorum)*' (CIL VIII 9324), defined more precisely on an inscription from Saldae (CIL VIII 8924) as the '*militibus d(ominis) n(ostris) invictissimorum Augg(ustorum), tam ex Mauret(ania) Caes(ariensis) quam etiam de Sitifensi*'. These were the regular soldiers of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, perhaps organised under two subordinate equestrian commanders, a *praepositus limitis Caesariensis* and a *praepositus limitis Sitifensi*. Clearly there must have been a significant army in the province at the dawn of the Late Imperial era, capable of independent action in the field under an energetic governor.¹

II.1 EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF REGIMENTS

Some clues as to the composition of that army are provided by epigraphic record. Despite a dramatic reduction in the military corpus, it is possible to trace the survival, up to the end of the third century and into the fourth, of some regiments which had belonged to the North African armies of the Principate. This task is made easier by two recent syntheses, those of Benseddik (1982), who covers the auxiliaries of Mauretania Caesariensis, and Le Bohec (1989B), who deals with the corresponding troops of the African army (Proconsularis, Numidia and Tripolitania). Although neither study embraces the Late Empire they do incorporate all inscriptions relating to auxiliary units up to the accession of Diocletian.²

II.1.1 Mauretania CaesariensisAlae

The Mauretanian army may be examined first. Most of the regiments tend to disappear from view during the middle decades of the third century. A decurion of the *ala II*

1. For the inference that the Saldae inscription denotes the existence of two regional officers within Caesariensis, comparable to the *praepositus limitis Tripolitanae*, see Di Vita Evrard 1985, 165-166 n.75, and below n.24.

2. For the army of Caesariensis see also Devijver 1984, a valuable review of Benseddik 1982, which corrects some errors in the latter work. *Legio III Augusta*, covered by Le Bohec's monumental *La troisième légion auguste* (1989A) is not discussed here since it plainly survived to be incorporated within the regional field army rather than the *limitanei*. Le Bohec 1986A, and 1989A, 451-488, also contain useful discussions of military arrangements in the Numidian-Tripolitanian command during the mid-late third century.

Thracum was responsible for setting up the victory inscription at Ain bou Dib in 254 (CIL VIII 20827 = ILS 3000), whilst another former decurion of this regiment is encountered burying his daughter in 262. The *ala Sebastena* is also last recorded at this time. When Cornelius Octavianus relinquished his governorship, to become prefect of the *Misenum* fleet, a decurion from that *ala* set up a dedication in honour of his patron. Nothing whatsoever is heard of the *ala Miliaria* in the second half of the third century or later, though there are a number of undated epitaphs from *Ala Miliaria* and elsewhere in western Caesariensis which might belong to this period. Similarly, the latest explicit mention of the *ala exploratorum Pomariensium* occurs during the reign of Gordian III. However the *praefectus equitum*, Antonius Ianuarius, recorded at *Pomaria*, may have commanded this regiment and could be attributed to the early fourth century as readily as the third.³

In contrast, the *ala Parthorum* not only furnishes yet another mid-late third century decurion but also, more importantly, a trooper at *Regiae*, whose epitaph is dated to 355 by the provincial era. The latter represents one of the clearest pieces of evidence that the regimental system survived up to the mid-fourth century, at least.⁴

Cohorts

A similar pattern emerges with the cohorts. For example the *cohors Singularium* is last heard of in the 250's, when it was 'in territorio [A]luziensi praetendentium' alongside the *vexillatio equitum Maurorum*, both under the command of the Auzian notable, Gargilius Martialis. Most are not even recorded as late as that. For example the *cohors II Sardorum* is last heard of during the reign of Gordian III, when its tribune made a dedication to Mithras at Ain Teukria.⁵

3. For the 2 *ala Thracum* dedications see Benseddik 1982, 214 nrs.75 & 77 respectively; cf. also Leveau 1973, 167-168.

The *ala Gemina Sebastena*: Benseddik 1982, 209 nr.55; cf. Pavis d'Escurac-Doisy 1953 (AE 1954, 136 + CIL VIII 21000).

The *ala Miliaria*: Benseddik 1982, 36-38 & 200-205.

The *ala exploratorum Pomariensium*: a dedication to the local deity *Aulisva* at *Pomaria*, CIL VIII 9907 = ILS 4492 = Benseddik 1982, 197 nr.11; and for a decurion of the *ala* in charge of a *numerus* at *Aquae Sirenses* in 242, CIL VIII 9745 = Benseddik 1982, nr.10; cf. Benseddik 1982, 30 & 197.

Antonius Ianuarius: CIL VIII 9909 = Benseddik 1982, 244 nr.221 - his son's epitaph, *Memori(a)e Antoni Donati, innocentis* etc.

4. The [dec(urio)] *alae Parthoru[m]* at *Aion Sbib*: AE 1954, 135, cf. Cadenat 1953, 177-178, Benseddik 1982, 207 nr.45, and Christol 1977, 405-406 (with emended reading). The career inscription is too mutilated to provide a firm date but does offer some clues. The anonymous officer was promoted to be a centurion in successive legions with the additional title of *protector*. Christol (1977) has argued strongly that the practice of bestowing this title upon legionary centurions began under Gallienus, giving a *terminus post quem*. Successive transfers from legion to legion were also prevalent in the third century and the Diocletianic era.

The epitaph of *Iunius Crescens* at *Regiae*, CIL VIII 21629, *D(iis) m(anibus) s(acrum) / Iunius C[rescens] eq(ues) al(ae) Pa[r]t(horu[m]) vi(x)it / annis / xxiiii / Aur(elia) Cato(la) ma(ter) fecit / pr(ovinciae) ccc/xvi*; and cf. Salama 1966, 1297, 1303 nr.18 & 1305.

5. Gargilius Martialis' epitaph: CIL VIII 9047 = ILS 2767, Benseddik 1982, 225-226 nrs.131/168/193. The elogium was set up in 260 but Martialis' command of the combined force probably occurred a few years



Q. Atilianus' epitaph – AE 1979, 684

(after Leveau 1979)

More interesting is the epitaph of Q. Atilianus, *praefectus militum cohortis Hispanorum*, at Sufasar in the Chélif valley. Leveau (1979, 143) convincingly assigns a very late third or fourth century date to this officer, on several grounds, for example his title *praefectus militum cohortis* and the absence of a *gentilicium*. Most significant of all are the details relating to the latter part of Atilianus' life, his dismissal and subsequent journey to Carthage to regain his post or obtain a new one. The episode implies the existence of an overriding military command, based at Carthage, encompassing Mauretania Caesariensis and probably most of North Africa. The newly established *vicarii* played such a role, during the Tetrarchic era, as did the *comes Africae* later on in the fourth century, after that officer had acquired responsibility for the security of the entire diocese, including Caesariensis.⁶

Atilianus' travails are strikingly reminiscent of those encountered by Flavius Abinnaeus, in mid fourth century Egypt. The latter twice had to defend his post from usurpation by favourites of the *comes Aegypti*, on both occasions going up to the *comitatus* to present his case before the Augustus, Constantius II, himself.⁷

In contrast the milestones set up in 270 and 282-283, recording the distance to *Cohors Breucorum*, cannot be regarded as conclusive proof that *cohors II Breucorum* was still stationed at Henchir Souik. The cohort had given its name to the site it garrisoned in the same way that the *ala Miliaria* and the *numerus Syrorum* did, and it is the site from which the milestones mark the distance (in this case not very accurately).⁸

Numeri

earlier, c. 254; see Christol 1976, 72-74, 76-77. This stone also represents the last record of the Moorish cavalry vexillation.

Cohors II Sardorum at Ain Teukria: CIL VIII 21523, cf. Benseddik 1982, 231 nr.157.

6. The prefect, Q. Atilianus: Leveau 1979, 141-143 = AE 1979, 684; cf. Benseddik 1982, 226 nr.132 (who allocates the inscription a 3rd century date).

The text: *Mercurialis, s(ua) p(ecunia) ded(icavit). // D(is) m(anibus) s(acrum); / Q(uintus) Atilianus, pr(a)ef(e)ctus mil(itum) c(ohortis) H(ispanor(um)) pro(vinciae) Caes(ariensis), / acce(p)it suc(cessorem), rever(sus) / a Chartagine, ac(c)i/dis, ac(c)ep(ta) des(ignatione), vi/x(it) a(nnis) xxxi; verna / Sicculus. (H)ispanor(um)*'. Examination of the published photograph of the lost squeeze suggests an 'I' can be read at the very left hand side of the fifth line. There may also be very faint traces of a triangular punctuation mark between the 'C' and the 'H', suggesting the 'H' belongs to 'Hispanor(um)' rather than 'c(o)h(ortis)'. Alternatively the punctuation mark may have been omitted, although this would be the only instance in the entire text.

The *comes Africae* may not have exercised direct authority over Mauretania Caesariensis until the reign of Valentinian. Like the vicar the *comes'* permanent headquarters is unclear and he may have been peripatetic for much of the time; see below VI.5.2.

7. Flavius Abinnaeus: P. Abinn. I.

8. The milestones to *Cohors Breucorum*: CIL VIII 22598, a *Coh(or???) / Breuc(or)um {m(ilia) p(assuum) I} / m(ilia) p(assuum) IIII* (AD 270); and CIL VIII 22599, a *Coh(or???) Bre(u)corum {m(ilia) p(assuum) I} / m(ilia) p(assuum) V* (AD 282-283). For the sites in this sector see VI.3.1.

Finally the continued presence of the *numerus Syrorum* at Lalla Maghnia is signified by the epitaphs of two nco's. The *optio* Aurelius Massamarus was serving in that *numerus* when he was killed in action. His death is difficult to date owing to conflicting readings of the provincial year by Fey and Renier. The earlier alternative (AD 272) is often cited as though it were almost certain, but there is no reason to prefer it over the later one (AD 422). Indeed other restorations of the missing figures are possible.⁹

The second epitaph, is that of the *<h>ordinatus*, Valerius Germanus, who was buried at *Numerus Syrorum* in 353 or 384. The inscription does not state what regiment Germanus belonged to but his grade of *ordinatus* suggests that he served in one of the older style of units established during the Principate, very possibly the *numerus Syrorum* itself. Indeed use of the title *ordinatus*, instead of *centurio* has been specifically associated with *numeri*, though there is considerable debate on this point. At the very least the stone suggests there was still a garrison of *limitanei* during the fourth century at this key site.¹⁰

II.1.2 Numidia and Tripolitania

Comparable epigraphic evidence is much scarcer in Numidia and Tripolitania. The latest specific reference to an auxiliary unit in Numidia is a (building?) dedication to the emperors Carinus and Numerian (283-284) by one Prospectus, *praep(ositus) aeq(uitum) al(ae) p(rimae) P[ann(oniorum)]*, *cum commilitonibus [et a]lequitibus n(umeri) collati*. Curiously this derives not from *Gemellae*, where the regiment had been based probably since the reign of Hadrian, but from the *municipium* of *Lambiridi* (Kherbet ouled Arif) 20 km west of *Lambaesis*. It is unclear what if anything this signifies and it would perhaps be rash to assume the *ala* was transferred from *Gemellae* to *Lambiridi*, or somewhere in the vicinity, on the basis of this inscription alone. A legionary vexillation did arrive at *Gemellae* in October 253 but it does not seem to have displaced the *ala* as the garrison there, since the cavalry regiment was still stationed at the base a few years

9. The *numerus Syrorum*: the epitaph of the *optio* Aurelius Massamarus, CIL VIII 9964, cf. Benseddik 1981, nr.210.

The date: Fey read 'an(no) pp(rovinciarum) CCXXXIII' (AD 272) whereas Renier saw 'CCCLXXXIII' (AD 422). On this basis one might also suggest 'CCLXXXIII' (AD 322) or 'CCCXXXIII' (AD 372). Speidel (1973, 171) and Benseddik only note the earlier date but Salama (1954, 226 n.112) apparently prefers the Renier's alternative.

Massamarus' gentilicium Aurelius might imply a pre-Constantinian date, but it is conceivable that the inferior grade of *limitanei*, deriving from the cohorts, *alae* and *numeri* of the Principate, did not warrant the Later Imperial gentilicium Flavius.

On this regiment see Speidel 1973 and 1977, Rebuffat 197*.

10. Valerius Germanus: CIL VIII 9967 & p.976.

The provincial year was read as 'an(no) pp(rovinciarum) CCCXIV' (AD 353) but on p.976 of CIL VIII it was noted that IIII would more likely than IV in this period, and therefore the year should be read as 'CCCCXLV', AD 384.

For the most recent discussion and summary of the current state of knowledge and confusion over the nco grades within *numeri* see Southern 1989, 101.

later, in 257/258. The vexillation was perhaps touring the frontier districts to boost the army's morale and emphasize renewed Roman strength after the restoration of *III Augusta*. Given the archaeological evidence that a strong military presence was maintained along the Seguaia Bent el-Krass *fossatum*, south of *Gemellae*, during the fourth century, it is difficult to envisage that site being totally abandoned by the army during the later third century.¹¹

Only one other unit is attested epigraphically in the Numidian-Tripolitanian command during the second half of the third century. Its existence is revealed by the construction, in 263, of a small fort, the *castra coh(ortis) VIII Fidae*, at Ras el-Ain, an '*opportuno loco*' in western Tripolitania. During the previous decade, a few cavalrymen belonging to the cohort had been stationed at Bu Ngem, on the evidence of an *ostrakon* from that site. Presumably the main body of the regiment was quartered somewhere in eastern Tripolitania prior to 263, perhaps Gheriat el-Garbia, where it may have replaced the legionary vexillation after the demise of *III Augusta*. The fate of the main unit stationed at Bu Ngem and detailed by the *ostraca* - presumably the *vexillatio Golensis* recorded by a Phillipian inscription - is altogether uncertain after the probable abandonment of that fort in the early 260's.¹²

There is one further piece of evidence for the survival of elements of the earlier regimental organisation, which suggests the meagreness of the epigraphic assemblage may confer a misleading impression. In the chapter of the *Notitia Dignitatum* dealing with the *comes Africae* and his subordinate *praepositi limitum*, one of the entries reads '*praepositus limitis secundaeform in castris Tillibanensibus*'. This should surely be amended to *praepositus limitis secundae afrorum in castris Tillibarensibus*. In the chapter of the *dux Tripolitanae* the above entry is duplicated in the form *praepositus limitis Tillibarensis*, graphically illustrating how easily references to the units staffing the fourth century *limites* might be entirely submerged.¹³

The Numidian legion *III Augusta* is the only legionary vexillation to have survived from the army of the *Principatus*.

11. The Lambiridi dedication: AE 1980, 960. Le Bohec 1980, 946 suggests it was a temple that the *equites* of the *ala* and the *numerus collatus* built. Not all of the *ala* need have been involved (cf. Le Bohec 1989B, 36). It is conceivable that the *numerus* was commanded by a decurion, accompanied by some troopers from the regiment. The small composite unit may have been established at Lambiridi at a *statio*, a *prata* or perhaps a *burgus speculatorius* on the Thubunae/El Kantara-Lambaesis route.

Mil(ites) l(egionis) [III Aug(ustae) re]stitutae e Raet(ia) Gemell(as) regressi etc.: CIL VIII 2482 = 17976.

The last mention of the Pannonian *ala* at *Gemellae*: AE 1950, 63; cf. Christol 1976, 71; Le Bohec 1989B, 55-56.

12. Ras el-Ain: CIL VIII 22765 = ILTun 3 = ILS 8923; Bu Ngem: Marichal 1979, 436. For the unit see Le Bohec 1989B, 76-79 & 103-104.

The *vexillatio Golensis*: Rebuffat 1985, Rebuffat and Marichal 1973, Marichal 1979 and see below II.2.

13. *Praepositus limitis secundaeform in castris Tillibanensibus*: ND Occ. XXV, 33. Euzennat & Troussat 1978, 147-148 (cf. also Euzennat 1977A, 133) restore simply *praepositis limitis secundanorum*, whilst Mattingly (1984, 251) suggests a second alternative *praepositus militum secundae Afrorum in castris Tillibarensibus*. In any case all these alternatives must refer to the *cohors II Flavia Afrorum equitata* (contra Cagnat 1913, 731 & 757) and imply its close association with the zone around Remada (Tillibari).

II.1.3 Conclusion

Thus from western Caesariensis to Tripolitania there is evidence that the frontier zone was still manned by regular troops, descended from the army of the Principate. Most of the relevant texts belong to the later third century but a few can be assigned to the fourth century whilst others are of uncertain date, as likely to follow the accession of Diocletian as precede it.

Rather than denoting a drastic thinning out of the frontier garrison during the later third and fourth centuries, of the kind postulated by Mattingly, the dwindling number of military tombstones may simply reflect the pressure of economic crisis, notably the hyper-inflation of the third century, on the individual soldiers themselves. Jones (*LRE*, 30-31 & 623-624 and 1974, 208-209) noted that fourth century soldiers had suffered a drastic reduction in pay compared to their opposite numbers of the first-second centuries. Despite subsequent revisions of the estimated rates of soldiers' pay, Jones' basic argument still holds true. Moreover the pay and privileges of the *cohortales* and *alares* were the lowest in the army. Those were precisely the sort of troops who served in the North African *limites*. Consequently it is likely that the African *limitanei* did not have sufficient purchasing power to afford expensive items, like inscribed tombstones, to the same extent as soldiers of earlier periods. Their few epitaphs may represent the visible tip of a far more widespread force.¹⁴

II.2 PRAEPOSITI LIMITUM

The tentative image of surviving regimental organisation detailed above is contradicted by the *Notitia Dignitatum*. This document, compiled at the end of the fourth century or beginning of the fifth, presents a very different picture, which must be addressed before further evidence for a regular military presence in the African frontier zone is examined.

The Numidian legion *III Augusta* is the only instantly recognisable survivor from the army of the Principate, recorded in the *Notitia*. It is located amidst the lists of field army units, (*comitatenses*) in chapters five and seven, alongside other regiments apparently forming part of a regional field army under the command of the *comes Africae*. The other units are all of manifestly later origin, possessing names typical of the Later Roman army. Furthermore the chapters specifically allocated to the three generals of the African diocese, the *comes Africae* the *dux provinciae Tripolitanae* and the *dux et praeses provinciae Mauritaniae Caesariensis*, do not merely omit all but one reference to the pre-Diocletianic units but in fact virtually dispense with regimental organisation altogether. Instead they display a structure unique to themselves consisting almost entirely of

14. The arguments for a reduction in the frontier army are set out in Mattingly 1984, 191-194, 250-251, 1987, 84, 1989, 141-143, but see below VI.6. For the erosion of military pay during the Late Empire see Jones *LRE*, 30-31 & 623-624 and 1974, 208-209; also Duncan-Jones 1978.

praepositi limitum, commanders of local frontier sectors. In contrast the *comes Tingitaniae* chapter retains the normal regimental format, in this case composed of one *ala* and six cohorts.¹⁵

So marked is the apparent difference between the late fourth century and the third century organisation that it was natural to assume that it must reflect some radical transformation in the composition of the garrison itself. Thus the region's distinctive command structure was one of the main supports for the argument that there were no regular troops, or at any rate very few, on the North African frontiers, their place being taken by a militia of 'soldier-farmers' or Berber tribesmen (*gentiles*).

In fact the creation of the sector *praepositi limitum* was not the dramatic innovation suggested by the *Notitia*. Rather it marked the end of a long process, whereby local regimental officers or legionary vexillation commanders steadily accumulated territorial responsibilities during the third century.

This process has been documented by Mattingly (1982, 77-78 and 1984, 240-245), with particular respect to Tripolitania. As early as the Severan period auxiliary regimental officers there are recorded with authority over additional smaller composite units (*numeri collati*) or small legionary detachments. The prefect of *cohors II Flavia Afrorum eq.*, at Remada (*Tillibari*), had at least one such subsidiary unit in his charge. On the dedicatory inscription of the a *praesidium* erected in 198 at Si Aoun, the decurion Aemilius Emeritus was entitled *praepositus coh(ortis) II Fl(aviae) Afr(orum) et n(umeri) col(lati)*. It is tempting to assume that the *numerus* was assembled for the very purpose of garrisoning the new fortlet. Si Aoun lay over 30 km south of Remada, and several other sites can be identified which very likely represent outpost fortlets dependent on Remada, for example Henchir Medeina (*Thebelami*) and El Majen. Roughly 70 km separate these last two posts, as the crow flies, giving some idea of the size of the *Tillibari* command.¹⁶

Further east, small legionary detachments were stationed at settlements along the so-called *Limes Tripolitanus* road, during the Severan period. Two definite examples are attested, at Ain Wif (*Thenadassa*) and Ain el-Auenia (*Auru*), and there were doubtless others. Both detachments fell under the authority of auxiliary commanders. The prefect of *cohors II Hamiorum* was *praepositus* of the vexillation at *Thenadassa*, the detachment being directly officered by one of the legion's

15. *Legio III Augusta*: ND Occ. V 105 & 254; Occ. VII 151 (*Tertio Augustani*). It has the rank of *legio comitatensis*.

For the chapters of the *comes Africae*, the *dux et praeses Mauritaniae Caesariensis* and the *dux provinciae Tripolitanae* see ND Occ. XXV, XXX and XXXI respectively.

16. The Si Aoun dedication: AE 1909, 104 = ILTun 1 = ILAf 9 = ILS 9177.

For the identification of fortlets under the supervision of Remada see Mattingly 1984, 243-244.

The sites: Si Aoun - Troussset 1974, 118-120 nr 130; El Majen - Troussset 1974, 121-122 nr 135; Mattingly 1984, 286; Henchir Medeina - Troussset 1974, 109-110 nr 125.

centurions bearing the title *princeps vexillationis*. In turn the *Auru* vexillation was associated with *cohors I Syrorum sagittariorum*. The bases of these two cohorts have not been firmly identified but the most likely candidates are Edref near Zintan (*Tentheos?*) and Mizda.¹⁷

It is surely the existence of these extensive auxiliary commands, which explains the involvement of a tribune, Numisius Maximus, in the construction of the *centenarium* of Gasr Duib some fifty years later, in 246/247. As Mattingly (1991) observes Maximus was obviously not based in the *gasr*. Instead, he and the bulk of the troops in his charge were probably quartered at *Tentheos*, 30 km to the north-west, as suggested by the mention of the *regio limitis Tentheitani partita* in the dedicatory inscription. Possession of the title tribune would suggest Maximus was the commanding officer of an auxiliary cohort, in theory a milliary one. Mattingly argues for the *cohors I Syrorum sagittariorum*, as a possible candidate. It was doubtless a detachment from the cohort, or conceivably a subordinate unit, which was to man the new *centenarium*, and therefore it was Maximus' responsibility to oversee the tower's construction. Gasr Duib was thus simply a small outpost, dependent on a headquarters at *Tentheos*.¹⁸

The centurion *praepositi* of the larger legionary vexillations, stationed at bases like Gheriat el-Garbia and Bu Ngem, were charged with similar responsibilities to those borne by auxiliary commanders (unlike the centurions at *Thenadassa* and *Auru*). Bu Ngem lies at the centre of a network of outposts, several of which are named in the mid third century ostraca from that site. A *numerus collatus* was present alongside the legionaries by 236/238, if not earlier, the term perhaps in this case simply denoting an *ad hoc* assortment of auxiliary cavalymen who served as scouts, messengers and escorts. An imperial dedication from *Bezereos*, dated to 209-211, incorporates a list of all the members of the legionary vexillation then in garrison. Although incomplete, the inscription can be estimated to have contained the names of 300 men, too large a force to be accommodated in the extant fort of 0.33 hectares. *Bezereos* must simply have been the headquarters of the vexillation, the bulk of the force being outstationed in fortlets such as *Tisavar* (Ksar Rhelane) and *Henchir Krannfir* (or *Khanefi*).¹⁹

Such developments were not restricted to Tripolitania, though they are undoubtedly most apparent there in our sources. The Severan occupation of the eastern Saharan Atlas did not result in the establishment of new regimental bases in that region. Instead the Mountains of the Ouled Nail were policed by detachments drawn from the legion or the *numerus*

17. Mattingly 1982, 1984, 242 & 244, and 1985, 71-72. Cf. IRT 868 & 869 (*Thenadassa*), and Brogan and Reynolds 1960, 51 nr.1 = AE 1962, 304 (*Auru*).

For the probable site of *Tentheos* at Edref near Zintan see Hammond 1967, 13, and Mattingly 1984, 266.

18. The Gasr Duib inscription: Goodchild & Ward-Perkins 1949 = Goodchild 1976, 27-28, whence IRT 880 = AE 1950, 128; for recent detailed discussion see Di Vita-Evrard 1985B, 1988, and now Mattingly 1991 (slightly modified readings are offered in the last 2 works).

19. *Bezereos*: Mattingly 1984, 243.

Palmyrenorum. Whenever verifiable each vexillation included a mounted component, additional cavalymen being provided by the *ala Flavia* and the *ala I Pannoniorum* if necessary. The last named regiment, based at *Gemellae*, performed a pivotal role of command and control over this deployment, to the point that one can talk of an emerging *Gemellae* command.²⁰ The legionary construction party sent to establish a small fort at *Castellum Dimmidi* in 198, was escorted by troopers of the Pannonian *ala* and led by the latter's prefect, *Flavius Superus*. This arrangement was only temporary. *Superus* and his *equites* had apparently left before the end of the year, either returning to *Gemellae* or proceeding further on long range patrol, whilst the legionaries - drawn from *III Gallica* as well as *III Augusta* - remained in place under the command of two centurions, one from each legion. However, there are other hints of a proto *limes Gemellensis*. An *ordinarius*, *princeps vecsillationis*, *Valerius Crescens*, appears at *Ausum* (*Sadouri*) on an undated but probably third century inscription. Following the analogy of the similarly titled legionary centurion at *Ain Wif*, *Crescens* probably commanded a vexillation stationed at *Ausum*, under the supervision of a *praepositus* located elsewhere, perhaps the *praefectus alae* at *Gemellae*. Admittedly the fort at *Ausum* is large enough, at just under a hectare, to house most if not all of a full auxiliary unit, but it is quite conceivable that the site was not garrisoned at full strength throughout its entire life. The Pannonian *ala* may also have had a presence at *Gahra* at some stage. A dedication to *Sol Invictus* was set up by a legionary centurion, a *beneficiarius consularis* and a decurion from the Pannonian regiment. It is tempting to suggest that these three were the senior officers at the post. The *beneficiarius* may have been in charge of local administration, or intelligence gathering or some such function, whilst the centurion and decurion commanded detachments from their respective units.²¹

In *Mauretania Caesariensis* a slightly different but related development is implied by the strict alternation of *alae* and cohorts along the western section of the *nova praetentura*. That pattern was obviously not accidental and was presumably designed to enable the formation of mixed infantry and cavalry forces at any point on that sector. A possible side-effect may have been the evolution of *de facto* zonal commands, with the higher ranking cavalry prefect acquiring a degree of tactical authority over the infantry officers.²²

A similar process was already well advanced in one part of central *Caesariensis*, by the mid third century. *Q. Gargilius Martialis* exercised command as *praepositus cohortis*

20. For Severan deployment in the Saharan Atlas see Picard 1947; Salama 1977, 584-587 and Daniels 1987, 253. The epigraphic evidence is usefully collated by Le Bohec 1989A and 1989B. There is no reason to accept Carcopino's (1926 & 1933) elaborate theory that the legionary detachments were supplanted by Syrian *numeri*, under Severus Alexander, on the available evidence. The reality was doubtless a great deal more fluid, with small detachments from both corps being rotated through the various outposts in the region.

21. The decurion at *Gahra* must have died during his term of duty there for his epitaph has also been discovered in the neighbourhood, see Le Bohec 1989B, 42-43 & 61.

22. Salama 1977, 585-587, 590-591 & 595 (map 4), for Severan deployment in western *Caesariensis*.

Singularium et vexillationis equitum Maurorum in territorio Auziensi praetendentium. It was probably an emergency measure, connected with the campaigns against the Moorish chieftain Faraxen c. 254, but the benefits of having all the troops in the area answer to a single officer doubtless ensured that arrangement became permanent, marking a significant stage in the genesis of the fourth century *limes Auziensis*. Likewise the *Osdroeni iuniores*, who appear at *Kaputtasaccura* on one inscription, would in all probability have fallen under the aegis of the prefect of *ala I Augusta Parthorum*, which was also based in that fort during the Severan period. The *Osrhoenes* were doubtless only a small unit, perhaps transferred to *Kaputtasaccura* to help maintain, or reintroduce, Oriental archery skills to the 'Parthian' regiment.²³

Under Severus the titles *praepositus vexillationis* and *princeps vexillationis* were already being used to define the complex chains of command, which the policing the North African frontier zone necessitated. By the reign of Philip the territorial responsibility of at least some African unit commanders had been defined, as illustrated by mention of the *regio limitis Tentheitani partita* in the Gasr Duib inscription. This new development was probably fostered by the growing identification of troops with the area they policed, as emphasised by the appearance in the same reign of the *vexillatio Golensis*, a unit denoted solely by the name of its base, *Gholaia* (Bu Ngem). This vexillation was probably a former legionary detachment which had been left in place, cloaked in anonymity, after *III Augusta* was formally disbanded in 238. Several others may have continued to exist in the same manner and with similar nomenclature, for the legion had supplied many vexillations to garrison frontier outposts during the Severan period, especially in Tripolitania.

Unit commanders were not yet designated *praepositi limitum*, however. That title was reserved for equestrian regional commanders subordinate to the provincial governors. A *procurator Augusti, praepositus limitis Tripolitanae* is heard of in the 240's at Gasr Duib and Bu Ngem and probably continued to exist throughout the remainder of the century. The *limes Tripolitanus* is mentioned on the dedicatory inscriptions of the fort at Ras el-Ain in 263. In part the post may have been intended to compensate for Gordian III's disbanding of the legion, by providing more effective regional coordination of the remaining troops. Epigraphic evidence suggests that similar equestrian *praepositi* were established in Mauretania Caesariensis around this time, perhaps following experience in Tripolitania. Caesariensis, like the legate's command, sprawled over a very wide front so there was a clear role for such deputy military commanders.²⁴

23. For the long-standing military presence at the strategic crossroads of Auzia see VII.5.1.

The *Osdroeni iuniores* at *Kaputtasaccura*: CIL VIII 9829 revised by Carcopino 1925, 133-134.

24. For the *praepositus limitis Tripolitanae* see IRT 880 = AE 1950, 128 (Gasr Duib); AE 1985, 849 (Bu Ngem); for discussion: Rebuffat 1985B, Di Vita-Evrard 1985B and Mattingly 1991.

The final stage in this process was accomplished during the Tetrarchy, probably the very beginning of the fourth century. By reducing the size of the provinces the Diocletianic administrative reforms made the former regional *praepositi limitum* redundant and allowed that title to be transferred to the local auxiliary officers, effectively recognising their essentially territorial, policing role. By this stage virtually every local commander must have had more than one unit under his control, resulting in very cumbersome titlature. Adoption of the alternative label, *praepositus limitis*, obviated that difficulty. The first of these new local *praepositi limitum* to be encountered, is one Iulius Capito, at Auzia in 301. Like his forerunner, Gargilius Martialis, Capito was a member of the local, urban and semi-militarised aristocracy. The finest expression of the new hierarchy, of vicar-praesides-praepositus limitis, is to be found on the dedicatory inscription set up a couple of years later on the *centenarium Aqua Viva* (Ain Namia) in 303.²⁵

On this basis it is apparent that the creation of the sector *praepositi limitum* was only one part of a package of administrative measures, and not the most radical part at that. It effected no great change of substance at the lower level of the military hierarchy comparable with that wrought in the higher echelons of the region's administration. Rather it was simply a change of label, with local military officers acquiring a title which better described their role, as it had evolved in the third century. Consequently there is no need to assume that the title signified a radical transformation of the regional garrison nor any reason to reject the epigraphic evidence set out in the previous section, despite its limited nature. It is inherently likely that the fourth century *praepositi limitum* commanded much the same regular auxiliary troops as the third century regimental and vexillation *praepositi*. Certainly, literary and legal sources and archaeological remains confirm a widespread regular military presence in the frontier zone, during the fourth century, as set out below. There is good reason to believe that at least some of these troops fell under the authority of the *praepositi limitum*.

II.3 REGULAR SOLDIERS IN THE WRITTEN SOURCES

When examining the documentary sources for evidence of frontier troops it is not sufficient merely to look for any mention of soldiers serving in the region. The *comes Africae* also commanded a large field army, listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Some of the field regiments were established in the African diocese at the end of the third century, before the distinction between *limitanei* and *comitatenses* had evolved. The exact date of their elevation to comitatensian

Regional *praepositi limitum* in Caesariensis: Di Vita Evrard 1985A, 165-166 n.75, Rebuffat 1985B, 135 and CIL VIII 9790 + p.2048 = ILS 3251: *Dianae victrici / C(aius) Iul(ius) Maximus / [v(ir) e(gregius)] proc(urator) Aug(usti) / praepositus limitis*.

25. Iulius Capito at Auzia: CIL VIII 9025. Aqua Viva: AE 1942-1943, 81; cf. Leschi 1941 and 1943 = 1957.

status is uncertain but must have occurred between the 320's and the beginning of Valentinian's reign, as set out in section V.3. Prior to their promotion these units - consisting of legions and cavalry *vexillationes* - would have been ranked amongst the superior grade of *limitanei* (collectively labelled *ripenses* in some edicts). At that stage they presumably still had permanent bases like all units of *limitanei* but were not incorporated into the territorial frontier commands of the *praepositi limitum*.

In particular a good number of laws which deal with military affairs cannot be used, despite their referring specifically to conditions in North Africa or being addressed to senior officials in the African diocese. For example, in 374 the proconsul of Africa received an edict concerning the transport of clothing from his province to the army stationed throughout the African diocese. The regulation stipulated that soldiers were not to be dragged away from their stations to collect their uniforms. It provides little clue as to which type of soldier it covered and indeed may have had general application to both grades.²⁶

II.3.1 The Literary Evidence

The clearest literary reference to the *praepositi limitum* themselves is the letter of the Tripolitanian landowner Publicola to St Augustine. It is full of detail regarding the duties of the *praepositi limitum* and the everyday realities of frontier policing. There is nothing to suggest that the '*decurioni, aut tribuni, qui limiti praest*' mentioned by Publicola were anything other than ordinary military officers. Unfortunately the text is uninformative regarding the men such officers commanded.²⁷

Ammianus makes one probable reference to frontier troops at the very start of the campaign against Firmus. Having disembarked at *Igilgili*, on the coast of *Sitifensis*, the *magister militum*, Theodosius, was met by the *comes Africae*, Romanus, whom he then sent *ad vigilias ordinandas et praetenturas* - 'to organise the guards and forward defences'. The employment of term *praetentura* is particularly interesting given its application to the Severan military road and forward deployment in *Mauretania Caesariensis* and the widespread use of the associated verb *praetendere* to describe troops stationed in frontier outposts during the third century.²⁸

26. Transport of clothing: *CTh VIII v 33*.

Other relevant examples include *CTh VII i 6* (368, 370 or 373) - and cf. *CTh XII i 64 = CJ X xxxii 27* (probably another clause of the same law): allowing soldiers of curial origin in *Mauretania Sitifensis* to remain in the army if they had managed to avoid detection for five years. *CTh VII i 4* (349): issued to *Cretio*, probably *comes Africae*, regarding rounding up soldiers prematurely discharged. *CTh VII iv 2* (355) & 3 (357): concerning the meat (pork) ration of the troops stationed in Africa and preventing the *comes* drawing supplies from the public storehouses without the permission of the vicar.

27. Publicola's letter: *Aug Ep. 46*.

28. Romanus despatched to organise the outer defences: *AM XXIX v 5*. For examples of the use of *praetendentes* to describe soldiers outposted at *Castellum Dimmidi*, *Ghadames* and in the territory of *Auzia*

Ammianus mentions the local garrison army at several other points in his description of the war against Firmus. For example, one of Theodosius' first actions was to assemble the *legiones quae Africam tuebantur* and unite these *indigena milite* with the field army troops he had brought over from Gaul. *Legio* was perhaps not being used technically in this context, simply representing a more literary, classically correct, alternative to *numerus* - 'regiment'. Nevertheless it is likely that these phrases refer to the local field army, which consisted of legions and cavalry *vexillationes* and ranked either as *comitatenses* or as *ripenses*, the higher grade of *limitanei*. These are certainly the type of regiments named by Ammianus in his narrative.²⁹

Ammianus' account of the Austuriani raids against Tripolitania, although it primarily focusses on the political intrigues which surrounded the episode, does demonstrate that there were some local forces in the province. The transfer of responsibility for the province's defence (*negotiorummilitarium cura*), first to the *praeses* Ruricius then back to the *comes* Romanus, is unlikely to have involved those troops actually mentioned serving with Romanus (AM XXVIII vi 5, 17 & 23). The latter doubtless belonged to his field army, based outside the region. Instead the phrase probably denotes control over frontier garrisons stationed in the Tripolitanian *limites*.³⁰

II.3.2 The Legal Sources

Ironically one notable indication that sizeable numbers of regular troops were present in the frontier zone is provided by CTh VII xv 1, the very law which refers to the *gentiles*. This edict, examined in detail below (III.1), stipulated that vacant or usurped land formerly held by *gentiles* was to be allocated to deserving veterans if no *gentiles* willing to take it on could be found. Obviously, the presence of veterans in the frontier zone implies previous service as regular soldiers. Moreover the lands were to be allocated to veterans on merit, suggesting the latter were considered a sizeable reservoir of manpower which the imperial government could draw upon to take over any surplus.

Further mention of the *limes* and, by implication, its garrison is to be found in the fragments of a fiscal regulation inscribed at Carthage between 367-378 (AE 1950, 55). A portion of the taxes collected from the communities listed therein is denoted as being destined *nomine (annonae) limitis*, in contrast to that to be despatched overseas, to provide the grain supply for Rome, *nomine (annonae)*

see Wilkes 1977, 79 n.9 and add AE 1922, 54 = ILAf 27 = ILTun 57 = AE 1978, 886 at Bezereos for the *vexillatio qua[e] Vezerei praeten[dit]* at some point between 198-211.

29. African troops joined to Theodosius' field army: AM XXIX, v, 9.

The soldiers recorded by Optatus of Milev, taking action against the Donatist *circumcelliones* in the region around Bagai during the 340's doubtless belonged to the count's field army; cf. esp. Book III, 4.

30. Ruricius takes over military authority in Tripolitania: AM XXVIII, vi, 11.

naviculariorum. The text contains a reference to arrangements made by a civil official, Annius Tiberianus, earlier in the century. Tiberianus had been *comes Africae* between 325-327.³¹ The influential nature of Tiberianus' reforms is demonstrated by their reiteration in two other laws included in the Theodosian and Justinianic Codes. Only the kernel of these edicts is preserved in the extant passages in the codes, as is commonly the case with the legislation listed therein. This essentially consisted of the straightforward principle that as far as possible the frontier garrisons were to be supplied from adjacent farms. Tiberianus' actual work must have consisted of putting this principle into practice, the detailed operation of deciding which estates were to supply which forts and estimating the shortfall of revenue from the frontier provinces which would have to be met by the more distant communities of Africa Proconsularis, Byzacena and northern Numidia.³²

Whatever the precise meaning of the term *limes*, these references to supplies being furnished for its needs - *annona* assigned '*nomine limitis*' or '*frumenta* conveyed *ad limitem*' - are important because they signify the provisioning of a garrison of regular troops. Moreover, the allocation of set payments from designated estates according to longstanding arrangements, is clearly tailored towards soldiers based in fixed stations, in other words *limitanei*. Only the continuous requirement for pay and rations posed by such a force could account for this permanent fiscal cum logistical framework. Had the frontier been guarded solely by a tribal militia there would have been little need for the levying of *annona*. The men belonging to such a force would normally have lived on their farms like the ordinary civilian population. Rations would only have been drawn when the levies were on campaign, and even then the *gentiles* might have been expected to furnish their own supplies, certainly for campaigns of limited duration such as punitive raids. Thus the *gentiles*' requirement for *annona* would have been limited and is unlikely to have sponsored the elaborate regulations preserved in law codes and the fiscal tariff from Carthage, still less to have been used as a model throughout the Empire, as were the practices laid down by Tiberianus.

31. Tiberianus was one of the *comites provinciarum* who temporarily replaced the *vicarii* in several dioceses during Constantine's reign, not to be confused with the later *comites Africae* who were *comites rei militaris*. For Tiberianus cf. *PLRE* I, 911-912, sv. Tiberianus 2 & 4 and Barnes 1982, 146. For the dates of his office see *CTH* XII, v, 1, (326, emended to 325 by Seeck followed by most scholars including *PLRE* but not Barnes); *CTH* XII, i, 15, (327).

32. *CTH* XI, i, 11 = *CJ* X, xvi, 6 (365): *pro loco ac proximitate possessionum annona ad limitem transvehatur. quae iussio haut difficile capit effectum, si tabularii metu praesentium tormentorum a consuetis fraudibus arceantur* - (The emperors Valentinian and Valens to Dracontius, vicar of Africa) the payments in kind shall be conveyed to the frontier zone (or command) in accordance with the situation and proximity of landholdings. This order takes effect without difficulty, if the registrars through fear of ever-present torture may be kept from their customary fraudulent practices.' *CJ* XI, lx, 1, (385 or 368-369 according to Saumagne 1950, 156): Tiberianus *ad possibilitatem singulorum quorumque locorum intuens statuit certas possessiones, quae ad limitem frumenta conveherent. quocirca generali lege sancimus Tiberiani dispositionem oportere servari, amoventes quidquid vel potentia cuiuscunque elicit vel furtiva deprecatio, addentesque, nihilominus in futurum nulli licere adversus utilem vetustatem et praesentem legem nostram importuna et respuenda reposcere.*

II.3.3 Conclusion

It is difficult to imagine that supplies would have had to be exacted in Proconsularis - as they were to judge from the Carthage tariff - merely to sustain the occasional tribal posse, especially bearing in mind the stress placed upon the principle that taxes in kind should, if possible, be drawn from nearby estates. The revenues of the frontier provinces would surely have sufficed for such restricted purposes.³³

Remarkably similar conclusions are prompted by the archaeological evidence from the North African frontier zones. The placing and form of Late Roman forts and related installations in the region will be examined in sections VI.2-4, but one inescapable conclusion should be stressed here. Numerous forts of characteristic Late Roman type with projecting towers have been identified in Numidia, Tripolitania and to a lesser extent Mauretania Caesariensis. Like the levying of *annona* such structures would seem largely superfluous within a militia context, certainly on the scale of the remains apparent in Numidia. The forts contain barracks, either set against the circuit wall or arranged as free-standing blocks in traditional manner. These surely betoken regular troops, who alone would require such accommodation.

Admittedly not all the evidence listed above is absolutely unequivocal. For instance the veterans who were to be granted land once held by *gentiles* might conceivably have served in the count's field army and not amongst the *limitanei* - although such allotments would surely have been most attractive to soldiers already based in those same frontier districts. Justification for the logical assumption that at least some of the veterans of *CTh VII xv 1*, and some recipients of *annona nomine limitis*, were regular troops under the command of the *praepositi limitum*, is furnished by one final piece of evidence, a little noticed entry in the *Notitia*.³⁴

II.4 *LIMITANEI AND PRAEPOSITI LIMITUM*

At the head of the list of *praepositi limitum* in the *comes Africae*'s chapter there is the single word *limitanei*. As noted above it is apparent from the literary and legal sources that this term denotes the regular troops belonging to frontier commands and not a part-time peasant militia. This

33. It is not clear whether the Carthage tariff covered the entire diocese or just Africa Proconsularis. It would have been very large if the former was the case since the text appears to contain lists of every taxable community, grouped into fiscal districts, within the province or diocese. Certainly all the sites which can be identified with any certainty are located in Proconsularis.

For a general discussion of military supply during the Later Roman Empire see Jones *LRE*, 458-461, 626-630, 1194-1198 & 1260-1262.

34. The regular land grants which veterans were accorded by right in 4th century legislation are last heard of under Valentinian I.

feature is repeated at the head of the list of cohorts and *alae* in the *comes Tingitaniae*'s chapter but is not found in the chapters of the *dux Tripolitanae* or the *dux et praeses Mauretaniae Caesariensis*, confirming that it is not peculiar to commands containing *praepositi limitum*.

As Brennan (1972, 369) perceptively observed it is no coincidence that the only instances that the term *limitanei* is mentioned anywhere in the *Notitia*, occur in the chapters of the *comes Africae* and the *comes Tingitaniae*. Apart from the Western generalissimo, the *magister peditum praesentalis*, those two generals alone had direct authority over both frontier and field army troops. Therefore only in their chapters was it necessary to define status of the units or officers listed therein in order to make clear the relative importance of the *praepositi*. Elsewhere it was obvious which grade a unit belonged to.³⁵

There is good reason to believe that the need to distinguish what type of soldiers the *praepositi* commanded was greater in the original version of the *Notitia* than is apparent in the document as it is preserved today. It is probable that the *comes*' chapter initially listed all the troops under his command, both the *limitanei* and the *comitatenses*. The latter would have been listed above the *praepositi limitum* under their own distinguishing rubric. The same would have been true of the *comes Tingitaniae*'s chapter.

The extant version of the *Notitia* lists the field army regiments of these two generals not only under the two *magistri militum praesentales*, (ND Occ. V & VI) divided into infantry and cavalry, but also in that curious and late amalgam of a chapter, entitled the *distributio numerorum*, (ND Occ. VII).³⁶ The *distributio* represents the chapter of the third western *magister militum*, the *magister equitum per Gallias*, cannibalised to serve a new use. The *magister equitum per Gallias* is indeed recorded in the appropriate position in the initial index (ND Occ. I, 6). Decisive confirmation of this hypothesis (first suggested by Mann 1976, 4) is to be found at Occ. VII 111-117. There the *officium* of the *magister equitum per Gallias* sits incongruously, fossilised amidst the distorted remnants of its former chapter. Evidently when chapter VII was adapted by officials of the *magister praesentalis*, to serve as a handy guide to the regional deployment of Western field army units, the Gallic *magister's officium* was never deleted. This would imply that

35. Brennan's observation has been noted only by Whittaker 1978, 352 n.115, as far as I can discover. Independently, Mattingly (1984, 219 & 250-251) also perceived the importance of the *limitanei* rubric, but misunderstood its significance. He deduced from the heading that only the *limites* listed under the control of the count were garrisoned by regular frontier troops. Most of the *praepositi limitum* in *Caesariensis* and *Tripolitania*, he felt, were no more than tribal chieftains nominally subject to the Empire and accorded official titles by the military authorities in an effort to ensure their loyalty. The only regular *limitanei* in those two provinces, he suggested, were a couple of units of *milites* (in *Tripolitania*), and the soldiers stationed in the few *Tripolitanian* and *Caesariensian limites* which were also listed 'under the disposition' of the *comes*. On this basis Mattingly concluded that there were very few frontier soldiers in *Tripolitania* and *Caesariensis*.

36. See Appendix C.2 for fuller justification of this argument regarding the *distributio*.

the *distributio* was created by copying or simply excising the pages containing the field army *numeri* from the chapters of the various *comites*, where they were listed, and inserting them alongside the Gallic units. The units stationed in Italy, under the direct control of the praesental *magistri* would have been copied into the front of the document.

A second fossilised fragment provides some confirmation that *Occ. VII* was remodelled in this way. The three cavalry regiments based in Tingitana, and one of the African units (which I would argue had been transferred from Tingitana to Africa after the formation of the *distributio*) each incorporate the term *comitatenses* at the end of their proper name. When the Tingitanan field army list was incorporated in the *distributio* the heading *comitatenses*: was probably carelessly included as well. The document was subsequently tidied up by deleting the anomalous heading but the title *comitatenses* was added to those units to which it seemed to apply by the scribe responsible, although strictly speaking it was not necessary since all units in the *distributio* were *comitatenses* in the broader sense. This apparently occurred while the document was still functioning since it predates the transferral of the *equites scutarii iuniores* <*comitatenses*> from Tingitana to Africa.

Thus there is no need to assume that the composition of the sector-*limes* forces in the two other North African commands was any different from those supervised by the *comes Africae*. On the contrary it is *a priori* likely that *praepositi limitum* in Mauretania Caesariensis or Tripolitania would have had forces at their disposal similar to those available to their counterparts in the African command. On the only occasion it was necessary to define the nature of those forces in the *Notitia* it is made clear that they were *limitanei*, ie. regular frontier troops. Therefore one may assume unless there is specific evidence to the contrary, that every *praepositus limitis* listed in the three chapters had some regular *limitanei* at their disposal.

A piece of negative evidence may be tentatively used in support of this argument. It is logical to suppose that the converse of the above is true, namely that in a chapter where no rubric is present to divide one troop category from another it is likely that the same type is implied throughout that chapter. The chapter of the *dux Tripolitanae* contains what are obviously two regular army units, the *milites fortenses* and the *milites munifices*, based in *castris Leptitanis* and *castris Madensibus* respectively (*ND Occ. XXXI*, 29-30). These are located towards the end of the list of *praepositi limitum* with no rubric to differentiate them from the type of forces commanded by the *praepositi*. Again the conclusion must be that their status was similar, even if their origins and organisation may have been some what different.³⁷

37. For these two units - the only frontier regiments and the only higher grade *limitanei*, or 'ripenses', recorded by the *Notitia* in the African diocese - see section V.2.4.

This does not rule out the possibility that some *praepositi* also made use of tribal auxiliaries levied by *praefecti gentium* under traditional arrangements (which will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter). Nor does it deny that members of the Romano-Moorish or Libyan tribal nobility may have been appointed to hold local military sector commands, in the same way that their counterparts from the municipal communities were. However it is essential to emphasise that the posts listed in the *Notitia*, whether filled by soldiers promoted from the ranks or tribal magnates were formal posts, not honorary titles. As Mann (1976, 1) observes honorary titles are nowhere included in the *Notitia*. There is no reason to believe that the North African *praepositi* were an exception to this rule.³⁸

II.4.1. *Military titulature*

The survival of the auxiliaries of the Principate raises a question-mark over the full titulature of the frontier commanders. St Augustine's Tripolitanian correspondent Publicola, indicates that in his area, Arzugitana, those *qui limiti praeest* (ie. *praepositi limitum*) had the rank of *tribunus* or *decurio*. These two ranks are mentioned repeatedly in Publicola's letter, implying it was no accident that he chose them rather than other possible grades such as *praefectus* or centurion. He almost certainly had specific officers in mind. They were probably thus appointed as *tribunus cohortis*, *praepositus limitis* or *decurio alae I Pannoniorum, praepositus cohortis II Flaviae Afrorum et limitis Tillibarensis* to cite a hypothetical example. The same would apply to the prefects of *alae*.

Such elaborate titles were far too cumbersome for all but the most formal use, and indeed might only have been encountered on the codicil of appointment. In practice individual soldiers naturally still tended to declare the regiment they belonged to on private dedications and epitaphs. The officers themselves could choose from a variety of more succinct alternatives, including *praepositus limitis*, their regimental designation or simply their rank, *decurio*, *praefectus equitum*, *praepositus*, etc., depending on the context.³⁹

38. Some of *limites* are listed under the disposition of both the *comes* and one or other of the two neighbouring *duces*. This duplication is cited by Mattingly 1984, 250-251 as a secondary piece of evidence in support of his argument that only a few *praepositi* commanded regular troops. It is more likely to reflect an attempt on the part of the count to strengthen his control over military affairs throughout the diocese; see section VI.1.4.

39. For individual soldiers see above II.1.

The officers: Q. Atilianus, *praefectus militum cohortis Hispanorum* at Sufasar - AE 1979, 684. Saturninus, *dec(urio)*, builder of a *fundus* with the help of *incolae* at Dahmouni (ex Trumelet) - BCTH 1910 p. CLXXIX and see VIII.2.3 and Appendix L for full analysis. Antonius Ianuarius, *praefectus equitum* at Pomaria - CIL VIII 9909. Maximianus, *p(rae)p(ositus)* at Kherba of the Aouisset in 346 - AE 1955, 139, and see VIII.2.3 and Appendix K. Iulius Capito, *praepositus limitis* at Auzia in 301 - CIL VIII 9025. Valerius Ingenuus, *praep(ositus) limit(is)* supervising the construction of *centenarium Aqua Viva* in 303 - AE 1942-1943, 81.

It would not be surprising if frontier troops came to see themselves as 'the soldiers of such and such an area'. Some of the frontier districts had been in existence since at least the mid third century, as we have seen. Moreover the transformation of legionary vexillations into units like the *vexillatio Golensis*, after the theoretical disbandment of *III Augusta* in 238, must have intensified the association of troops with their local area. The fate of the Bu Ngem vexillation after the site was evacuated c.260 is unknown but similar units may have existed elsewhere and survived into the fourth century. It would be interesting, for example, to know how *Bezereos* was garrisoned during these years. Doubtless by the fourth century a member of a putative *vexillatio Bezerentana* would simply have described himself as *miles Bezerentanus*. The widespread use of *numeri collati*, in the third century, may also have contributed to a possible erosion of regimental identity. The trend would have been most pronounced amongst troops in newly-created *limites*, where there had not previously been a significant military presence. It is quite likely such new commands were garrisoned by drawing limited numbers of troops from each of the other *limites* in the same province, in effect a *numerus collatus* for the new *limes*. The *esprit de corps* of such troops must perforce have been focussed on the *limes* district they garrisoned, in the absence of any other common identity. These comments are only tentative hypotheses but they are worth bearing in mind when the archaeological evidence for the military organisation of the African frontier zone is analysed in Chapter VI.

II.5. CONCLUSION

Thus the army of the Principate did not simply cease to exist at the end of the third century, swept out of existence by a dramatic tetrarchic reform establishing a tribal militia of *gentiles*. On the contrary Diocletian's military policy, in North Africa as elsewhere, was inherently conservative. In general, existing forces or institutions were strengthened and reorganised but not abolished. In the case of North Africa the third century regiments were subsumed beneath the new system of local territorial commands and thus rendered virtually anonymous. They nevertheless remained the foundation of Late Roman military organisation in the frontier zones.

CHAPTER III

THE GENTILES

If regular troops were present in the African frontier zone, as proposed in Chapter II, what of the *gentiles*, the tribal militiamen who according to earlier interpretations supplanted the *limitanei*? The first step in determining the tribesmen's role is to reexamine *CTh VII xv 1* and assess its provisions not only from a North African and military viewpoint but also within the general context of Late Roman legislation.

III.1 *CTH VII XV 1: HONORIUS' EDICT OF AD 409*

III.1.1 The Text

CTh VII xv 1, is one of the most crucial documents relating to the North African frontier. Earlier interpretations have been instrumental in shaping our understanding of the region's military organisation during the Later Roman period.¹ The text is set out in full below with accompanying translation:

terrarum spatia, quae gentilibus propter curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati antiquorum provisione fuerant concessa, quoniam comperimus aliquos retinere, si eorum cupiditate vel desiderio retinentur, circa curam fossati tuitionemque limitis studio vel labore noverint serviendum ut illi, quos huic labore antiquitas deputarat. alioquin sciant haec spatia vel ad gentiles, si potuerint inveniri, vel certe ad veteranos esse non inmerito transferenda, ut hac provisione servata fossati limitis que nulla in parte timoris esse possit suspicio.

We have learn't that others have acquired the tracts of land, which have been granted to the *gentiles* by the humane foresight of antiquity to provide for the care and fortification of the frontier (*limes*) and the *fossatum*; if through their greed and longing the lands are retained (these others) shall know that they must serve with zeal and exertion regarding the maintenance of the *fossatum* and the protection of the frontier, just like those to whom antiquity allocated this task. Otherwise they shall know that these tracts must be transferred not undeservedly to *gentiles*, if they can be found, or at any rate to veterans, so that through the preservation of this measure in no part of the *fossatum* and *limes* may there be a hint of fear.

III.1.2 The Central Principle

What was happening in the frontier zone and why?

At some unspecified time in the past (*antiquorum... provisione*) tracts of land (*terrarum spatia*) had been granted (*concessa*) to a distinct category of individuals termed '*gentiles*'. The identity of the *gentiles* is not made explicit in the document and must be restored from other sources. In return for their occupancy of the *terrarum spatia* the *gentiles* had to perform certain duties associated with the *limes* (the frontier zone or military frontier command) and the *fossatum*. These duties were defined by two phrases, '*curam munitionemque*

1. It was on the basis of this text that Baradez assigned the collective title *fossatum Africae* to the North African linear barriers in his monumental work of 1949. Jones *LRE*, 651-653 is the most influential discussion of this text; cf also Jones 1971, 293-294 where a slightly different translation is provided.

limitis atque fossati' and '*curam fossati tuitionemque limitis*'. By 409 these lands were being usurped by other categories of individual, '*aliquos*', perhaps ordinary Roman citizens living along the frontier.

In response *CTh* VII xv 1, does not stipulate that the non-*gentiles* should be summarily ejected from their newly acquired lands. Only if they failed to meet the obligations once performed by the *gentiles* were the '*aliquos*' to be so treated, and new landholders, either *gentiles* or veterans, sought to fill their place.

The law's central purpose is clear enough. The duties implied by the phrase *curam munitioremque limitis atque fossati* had previously been incumbent only upon individuals with the status of *gentiles*. Anyone else acquiring pieces of the *terrarum spatia* would incur no such obligations to the state. Moreover, though not explicitly stated the inherent logic of the text suggests the *gentiles* were immune from any other sort of burden on their lands, such as regular taxation, further explaining why the *terra* were so attractive to non-*gentiles*. In essence the government sought to close this loophole by transforming the duty of *curam fossati tuitionemque limitis* from one conditional on the status of the individual to one dependent on ownership of these particular tracts of land.

This is in fact a common principle of Late Roman fiscal legislation. A parallel case may be noted in the case of the *follis*. This tax was levied annually on senators, being graduated into four bands according to the landed wealth of the individual senators. However by a law of 398 (*CTh* VI, ii, 21) the government ruled that land once owned by a senator and therefore burdened, indirectly, with the *follis* would continue to pay it even if it was alienated to person of non senatorial rank.²

The same is true of land owned by members of the state shipping corporations, the *navicularii*. The obligation to furnish merchant ships for the imperial government was legally attached to the lands of the guild members. Anyone or any organisation acquiring, whether by inheritance, purchase, gift or marriage, land burdened with the *navicularia functio*, was bound to become a member of the guild or at least contribute to its expenses.³

At Rome membership of the bakers' and butchers' guilds was obligatory on anyone who held or acquired property that had belonged to a baker or butcher respectively. These guilds respectively baked the bread and provided the pork for the capital's dole issues. Like the *navicularii* the bakers and pork butchers were effectively tied to the profession unless they abandoned their estates.⁴

2. For the *follis*, also known as the *collatio glebalis*, see Jones *LRE*, 431 & 1177.

3. The *navicularia functio*: Jones *LRE*, 827, 1049 & 1342; for the *navicularii* in general see Jones *LRE*, 827-830; 1974, 399-401 & 411.

4. Bakers and butchers guilds: Jones *LRE*, 699-704 & 1049; 1974, 399-401 & 411.

Henceforth the *spatia terrarum* were to fall into the same category. Once a tract of land had been burdened with *gentiles'* duties it was always so burdened, no matter how it was subsequently alienated.

Four major areas of uncertainty remain.

1. Who were the people labelled *gentiles*?
2. What was the territorial scope of the legislation and how widespread was the situation it describes?
3. When had the previous arrangements, involving *gentiles* alone, been introduced?
4. What exactly were the duties of the *gentiles* defined by the phrases *curam fossati tuitionemque* - or *munitionemque* - *limitis*?

These questions are not explicitly answered by the text but its detailed provisions contain several clues to their resolution, when examined alongside comparable Later Roman legislation.

III.1.3 Who?

The first question is relatively easily answered. A law of 405 stipulates that appeals from the *gentiles* and their *praefecti gentium* should go to the *proconsul Africae*. Mention of the *praefecti* provides the explicit link justifying the logical equation between the *gentiles* and the *gentes*, the Berber tribes whose survival into the Later Roman Empire is well-known. The institution of the *praefectus gentis* is a noteworthy feature of tribal administration throughout Roman rule, developing and changing over time, in pace with the African tribes themselves. The identification of the *gentiles* of CTh VII xv 1 with the tribal communities of North Africa opens up a wider range of epigraphic and historical evidence, most notably Ammianus' vivid account of Mauretanian tribal society.

III.1.4 Where and How Widespread?

The second question which needs to be addressed is that of the *gentiles'* precise location and the scale of their presence on the African frontier. Did the law refer to a problem which had arisen in one specific and perhaps quite restricted area or did it have a much more general application.

Unfortunately, as part of the process of drawing up the Theodosian Code the law has lost its preamble, which might have recorded more precisely the circumstances behind this measure.⁵

5. Jones *LRE*, 171, 347 & 475 for the process of drawing up the *Codex* and the usefulness of the legal preambles, which are preserved in the *novels* (new constitutions) enacted by mid-fifth century emperors such as Valentinian III and Theodosius II after the completion of the Code.

Nevertheless one important clue does survive. *CTh* VII xv 1 specifically associates the *gentiles* with the *fossatum* and the *limes*. It is noteworthy that both of these terms are recorded in the singular.

The meaning of *limes* has been exhaustively re-examined recently, notably by Isaac (1988). It may mean 'borderland' or 'boundary line' but in this late context is more likely to signify a frontier command, entrusted to a military commander such as a *dux* or a *comes*. In Africa the term designated the sphere of responsibility of the *comes Africae*, or the *duces* of Mauretania Caesariensis and Tripolitania, but could also refer to the area covered by one of their subordinate officers, the *praepositi limitum*.⁶

In contrast *fossatum* is more specific. As argued in section VII.4.2, the conventional view that the *fossatum* denotes the famous stretches of running barrier - surely the most prominent 'ditched structure' in the African frontier zone - may be accepted but with one important caveat. The term, in the singular, cannot designate the entire system, incorporating all the known lengths of linear barrier, as Baradez supposed, since the individual stretches do not form part of a single continuous structure. Instead it must refer to only one of the barriers. It follows that *limes* probably refers to one of the small, subordinate, frontier districts, under the authority of a *praepositus limitis*, one which incorporated a *fossatum*.⁷

This greatly narrows down the range of possible locations, since the shorter barriers, now termed *clausurae*, may be excluded. None could surely have been sufficiently important on its own to warrant such official concern and administrative attention. The remaining candidates, therefore, are the *limes Gemellensis*, containing the Seguaia Bent el Krass, the *limes Tubuniensis*, which covered the barrier running south of Tobna to reach Mesarfelta, and the *limites Zabensis* and *Thamallulensis*, which respectively absorbed the southern and northern arms of the Hodna *fossatum*. Finally the Tebaga 'clausurae', at 17 km might possibly be long enough to qualify. It probably lay within the remit of the *praepositus limitis Bezerentane*.

Although *CTh* VII xv 1 only directly links the *gentiles* with one barrier it is worth emphasising that this does not necessarily mean that tribesmen weren't also associated with the other linear barriers. The problems which prompted the reform outlined above may simply have been absent in the other sectors. It would be still more rash to interpret the law as evidence that *gentiles* were exclusively attached to the *fossata* and where the latter were absent so were the tribesmen.

6. For discussion of the term *limes* see also Forni 1974 and Mayerson 1989.

7. An alternative possibility is that *fossatum* was a piece of legal shorthand, a term designed to signify by example all the military structures of the frontier commands.

III.1.5 When?

The text is little help in establishing the date of the introduction of this system of maintaining the frontier. *Antiquitas*, the term used to denote this, might mean no more than a generation previously but could equally imply the system was of very long standing indeed.

It is conceivable that the care and maintenance of the *fossatum* concerned in this piece of legislation was allocated to neighbouring tribal communities at the very outset of the life of the barrier, forming an integral part of its organisation. Alternatively some major military reorganisation, such as the Severan advance (?), may have prompted its introduction. Responsibility may have been assigned to *gentiles* simply because they alone inhabited the surrounding area when the provisions were inaugurated. Conversely the term '*concessa*' might imply that the *gentiles* had been deliberately settled in the frontier zone by the imperial authorities at some stage. Groups defeated in inter-tribal warfare may have migrated towards the Roman territory and been received within the Empire, in return for performing certain duties. It is worth remembering however that all peoples newly conquered by Rome were considered utterly subject to her will. The boundary markers encountered in North Africa, which proclaim that lands were 'assigned' to this tribe or that community, in actuality probably do little more than recognise the pre-existing state of affairs. It is possible that *concessa* should be interpreted in the same way in *CTh* VII xv 1. The precise meaning of such terms is thus difficult to establish with any certainty.⁸

III.1.6 Cura et munitio-tuitio

The two phrases which define the duties of the *gentiles* - *curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati* and *curam fossati tutionemque limitis* - typify the elegant but imprecise, rhetorical language of Late Roman legislation. Guey (1939, 188), followed by Rebuffat (1980, 118), observed the two phrases are direct equivalents of one another. They comprise two formulae, *curam fossati* and *munitionem limitis*, arranged differently merely for rhetorical effect. It follows that the terms *tuitio* and *munitio*, describing the *gentiles*' responsibilities with regard to the *limes*, must be interchangeable. Two synonymous alternatives were used simply to provide the variety demanded by convention.

On this basis Guey and Rebuffat argue that two distinct obligations are referred to here, firstly, the maintenance of the *fossatum* (signified by *curam fossati*), and secondly, the guard, protection or watch over the frontier (*munitionem/tutionem limitis*). Matthews (1976, 170), on the other hand, maintains 'the various balancing phrases are intended to be complementary not contrasting; the sense is

8. For a few *barbarae gentes*...qui Romanis finibus adhaerent, recently pacified by Rome in the early 5th century see Aug Ep. 199, and below IV.2.4.

that the defence of the *limes* is to be achieved precisely by maintenance of the *fossatum*.⁹

Cura fossati

The first of these duties is reasonably assured. The contemporary legal parallels noted above were either purely fiscal or involved financial expenditure, underpinned by designated estates, to provide the state with certain facilities. They also involved personal service supervising the facilities - the ships, bakeries or whatever - to ensure the latter were well-maintained and operated. Together these analogous cases support the contention that the *gentiles* were involved in the care and maintenance of military structures in the frontier zones, both financially and physically through their own labour.

Indeed the close association of *CTh VII xv 1* with a particular stretch of running barrier might imply its provisions were specifically tailored to the problem of maintaining such elaborate linear works. The task imposed on the owners of land through which passed another series of linear structures, namely the aqueducts supplying Rome, was perhaps not dissimilar. The holders of the *caespes formensis*, as the land was termed, were obliged to clean the aqueducts, in return for which they were exempted from all other extraordinary charges.⁹

A more directly military parallel, though one never actually implemented, is furnished by the anonymous author of *De rebus bellicis*, under the heading '*de limitum munitionibus*'. He proposed that forts (*castella*) should be built at every mile along the frontiers, by the landowners (*possessores*), of the estates along the frontier - '*quas quidem munitiones possessorum distributa sollicitudo sine publico sumptu constituat, vigilias sane in his et agrariis exercendis, ut provinciarum quies circumdata quodam praesidii cingulo inlaesa requiescat*'.¹⁰

Munitio/tuitio limitis

On the basis of the above it could be argued that by 409 the *gentiles*, like the *navicularii*, were simply landowners who provided the wherewithal for things to be done for the benefit of the state. So, where does this leave the second part of Guey and Rebuffat's equation - the guard, surveillance or defence of the frontier zone? Our understanding is hindered because the law never defines exactly what the terms *munitio/tuitio limitis* signify, but two considerations suggest

9. The cleaning of the Roman aqueducts: Jones *LRE*, 695 & 1285, citing Val III, Nov V 4 (440).

10. *De rebus bellicis* XX 1, published in Hassall & Ireland (eds.) 1979, ii, 19, translated at ii, 36: 'the landowners would construct these defences on their individual responsibility, at no expense to the state, and of course watches and country patrols should be organised in them, so that the peace of the provinces, protected by kind of a belt of vigilance, may rest unharmed in quiet.' For discussion of this passage see Johnson 1979.

that the scope of the *gentiles'* military burdens was fairly limited.¹¹

Firstly the fact that government was willing to allow ordinary squatters to retain the *gentiles'* lands suggests that little military skill was envisaged as necessary for the occupants of the *spatia terrarum*. Perhaps it was assumed that few of the squatters would actually remain under the new conditions. More significant is the decision to assign the lands to veterans - middle aged to elderly men - if *gentiles* could not be found. This implies the associated guard duties were not too onerous, otherwise the veterans' discharge would have been virtually meaningless. Indeed the award of *gentiles'* lands was clearly conceived in part as a reward for long military service ('*non inmerito*' - 'not undeservedly'), comparable to the tax-free allotments of frontier land to which veterans had been entitled in earlier laws.¹²

And what of the veterans' sons, who would inherit the *spatia terrarum*. Legally, they were bound to follow their fathers into the army. How could they fill the role of full-time soldier on one part of the frontier and part-time auxiliary elsewhere, were they to inherit their father's allotment whilst still enlisted? Discharge allotments that could not be passed on from father to son would have been highly unpopular.¹³

III.1.7 Summary

Re-examination of *CTh* VII xv 1 has shown that in fact it does not contradict the conclusions reached in Chapter II, namely that regular soldiers (*limitanei*), under the command of *praepositi limitum*, retained the primary responsibility for the defence of the North African frontier zone. The association of *gentiles* with veterans, in the text, suggests that tribesmen did not perform the same role as regular troops.¹⁴

11. There is no actual difficulty in envisaging a mechanism for implementing such a levy. The *gentiles* could have been organised into groups, whose members would take in turn to serve, rather like the fiscal system used to levy recruits for the army. Cf. Jones *LRE*, 615-616 for the arrangements for the conscription of recruits. The levy of horses for the army and labour for public works was probably similarly organised, cf. Jones *LRE*, 625-626 and 839.

12. For veterans' allotments see Mann 1983, 68 and Jones *LRE*, 636, 813, 1265 & 1335, who cite *CTh* VII xx 3 (325), VII xx 8 (364), & VII xx 11 (368); the latter gives veterans *carte blanche* the right to occupy deserted lands.

13. It is unlikely that the imperial government would have been entirely deaf to their complaints. Veterans' tax exemptions and immunity from the burdensome curial duties were maintained throughout the fourth century: see Jones *LRE*, 617, 635-636, 1256 & 1265. Particularly noteworthy in this context is *CTh* VII xx 2 of 326, famous because it preserves actual verbatim passages of the petition delivered by the assembled veterans in the presence of Constantine and the immediate granting of their requests by the emperor. Constantine may have been especially solicitous of military opinion but the text is still very revealing of the official attitude towards the veteran *eg.* "their old age shall enjoy to the full their leisure after their labours" (trans. Pharr 1952, 179).

14. In similar vein, Isaac (1990, 311-332) has recently reassessed the role of veteran colonies and the part that veterans can realistically have played in pacifying newly conquered provinces; cf. esp. pp.318-321.

The law may have been extremely restricted in its scope, dealing primarily with the reform of arrangements for the maintenance of one of the extensive linear barriers. The tax free status of the *gentiles*' tracts of land would compensate the tribesmen for expense of such care and maintenance duties, which could perhaps even be performed *in absentia*, in certain circumstances. The *gentiles*' compliance with such tasks would be relatively easy to monitor, and as frontier dwellers they would be able to identify more readily with their necessity. Veterans' familiarity with frontier installations would doubtless also be useful in keeping those structures well-maintained, another pointer to their suitability as replacements for *gentiles*.¹⁵

Two further points: the elegant language produced by the clerks of the *sacra scrinia* masks the *gentiles*' precise contribution to the defence of the frontier zone. For example the phrase *studio vel labore* may represent nothing more than a rhetorical flourish - 'with zeal and exertion' - but it could conceivably mask a very technical meaning - 'voluntarily (in defence of the *limes*) and as (conscripted) labour (maintaining the *fossatum*)'. Secondly, the law, albeit prompted by very specific circumstances, may subsequently have acquired general currency. At any rate obligations similar to those outlined by *CTh* VII xv 1, probably applied to tribal communities throughout the African frontier zone. To address these two questions adequately one must turn to other sources, notably the vivid portrayal of Moorish tribal society provided by Ammianus Marcellinus in his account of the revolt of Firmus.

III.2 AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXIX, V: *AUXILIA ET COMMEATUS*

III.2.1 Auxiliary Service

Ammianus makes it abundantly clear that tribesmen provided levies of irregular auxiliaries to bolster the troops of Theodosius.

After their final surrender the *Mazices* were granted 'the pardon which circumstances made it adviseable to grant'. The exact meaning of this phrase means becomes apparent later on, when a body of *Mazicum auxiliis* played a vital if unforeseen role in the conflict, arriving just in time to reinforce Theodosius' beleaguered force in the Ouarsenis or Dahra. Evidently the *Mazices* had resumed their status as loyal *gentiles*, their obligations to the state including the mobilisation of tribal levies during an emergency. The *Mazices*' auxiliaries probably served alongside Theodosius' troops for the remainder of the campaign. Masilla, a noble of the tribe, figures prominently during the very last stages of the conflict. His presence at Theodosius' headquarters is

15. For the involvement of veterans in reconstruction of fortifications in the frontier zone at an earlier date cf. *CIL* VIII 20834 & 20835, the construction of the circuit walls of *Rapidum* by the 'veterani et pagani consistentes apud Rapidum' with 'pecunia sumtu omni suo' in 167.

most readily explained by suggesting he was leading the contingent of his fellow-tribesmen.¹⁶

The *Iesalenses* similarly agreed to provide *auxiliares* when they submitted at *castellum Audiense*. The *Iesalenses* had submitted after Theodosius' first victory over the *Isaflenses*, promising to provide supplies and auxiliaries. In other words they promised to resume their customary obligations like the *Mazices* (though part of tribe at least was to renege on this commitment).¹⁷

A not dissimilar role may have been played by veterans, who were perhaps still regarded by the government as a valuable reserve, liable to be recalled to arms to swell campaign armies. Veterans could certainly perform staunchly in defence of fixed points during emergencies. One hagiographical account actually refers to the recall of veterans to military service during Maximian's Mauretanian campaigns. Unfortunately the *passio S. Typasii* is not an authentic contemporary document, but even if it represents a much later composition, with many anachronistic details, or perhaps a complete fabrication, one may assume the circumstances it describes, including the recall of veterans, would have had to have been plausible to its African audience. Again, this might partially explain why veterans were favoured as replacement occupiers of the gentile *spatia terrarum*, according to *CTh* VII xv 1.¹⁸

It is further noteworthy that *gentiles* did not provide the only emergency levy in Roman Africa. There is significant evidence for the existence of urban militias, as set out in Appendix B. The municipal forces may have been less effective than their tribal counterparts but they do provide an institutional parallel in the region, demonstrating that the *gentiles* were not simply bellicose islands in a demilitarised sea.

In this context Brunt (1975) perceptively observed, that the Roman authorities never possessed the capability to permanently and totally disarm a newly conquered people. That is not to say that they did not occasionally round up all the arms they could lay their hands on, as a short term measure designed to facilitate pacification. However these were not complex modern weapons systems. The principal equipment of

16. The *Mazices* surrender and are 'pardoned': AM XXIX, v, 26.

Location of these events.

Masilla: see section VIII.4.2.

17. The *Iesalenses* submit voluntarily, promising to furnish aid and provisions - '*auxilia praestare spondens et conneatus*': AM XXIX, v, 44. Renegades join Firmus and the *Isaflenses*: AM XXIX, v, 47.

18. A particularly outstanding act of military exploit performed by veterans is noted by Ammianus Marcellinus (XVI ii 1), when recording the events of 356 in Gaul. The veterans resident in and around Autun put their regular counterparts to shame by repulsing an Alamannic assault, after the garrison had abandoned hope of saving the city.

For the *passio Santi Typasii* see Monceaux 1904 and Barnes 1982, 186-187, contra Leveau 1977B, 306-309, who accepts the validity of the document. Many of its details are clearly later anachronisms, for example the title of the military governor Claudius, comes, *dux provinciae Caesariensis* is not appropriate before the late fourth century.

MOSAIC HUNTING SCENES



El Asnam

(after Dunbabin 1978)



'Offering of the Crane' – Khreddine, Carthage.

(after Dunbabin 1978)

the North African tribesmen were spears and shields of varying size. A veritable arsenal of such weapons could be manufactured within a very short space of time. There is in any case precious little evidence that any such comprehensive disarmament was ever aspired to by the authorities. A glance at the North African or Mediterranean mosaics depicting hunting scenes is sufficient to demonstrate that even in the peaceful heartlands of the Empire a powerful aristocrat might have at his disposal a cache of weaponry - spears, shields, swords, bows and slings - adequate to kit out his retainers in a manner indistinguishable from light cavalry or infantry. These mosaics are generally Late Antique in date but hunting is obviously an aristocratic pastime not exclusively confined to that period and there is no reason to suppose it was conducted any differently earlier in the Roman period.¹⁹

III.2.2 Supplies

Ammianus also makes it clear that in certain circumstances *gentes* furnished supplies for the army. The *Iesalenses* promised provisions - '*commeatus*' - as well as auxiliaries on their submission. Firmus too furnished provisions for Theodosius' troops, probably when they marched through the Mitidja plain, where he may have had extensive estates.²⁰

Both these instances concern the provisioning of a field army during a major campaign. Theodosius had pledged 'to make the harvests and stores of the enemy (Firmus and the rebellious tribes) the granaries of his troops', a declaration understandably greeted with joy by the other provincials because it relieved the latter of the burden of furnishing extra supplies for the campaign. But even in normal circumstances it is quite likely that *gentiles* would have to furnish *annona* for garrisons stationed on their territory, another duty perhaps subsumed beneath the mantle of *curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati*.²¹

III.3 SOME MODERN PARALLELS

The character of the emergency tribal levies may be illuminated by considering some later parallels from the same region. There is no guarantee that the examples outlined

19. Juristic commentaries on the *lex Iulia de vi*, which prohibit the amassing of arms, specifically exclude collections by landowners for the purpose of hunting (and also for their protection on land and sea journeys): Brunt 1975, 262-264. The mosaics: Dunbabin 1978.

20. The *Iesalenses* promise supplies: AM XXIX, v, 44 & 47.

Firmus furnishes provisions: AM XXIX, v, 15-16; see below VIII.4.2 for analysis of this apparent contradiction in terms and VIII.4.1 for the location of Firmus' estates. It is unclear whether all his estates lay within tribal land. Some were probably situated on the Mitidja plain, may have been included within the territory of the coastal cities *Rusguniae* and *Icosium* but others, such as the suggested example centred on the castle controlling the Beni Aischa pass, were doubtless to be found in the hills to the south and east where small tribal communities might be anticipated.

21. Theodosius' declaration: '*quod a provincialibus commeatum exercitui prohibuit dari, messes et condita hostium virtutis nostrorum horrea esse, fiducia memorans speciosa*' (AM XXIX v 10).

For the extra burden imposed by an army in action see Macmullen 1984, 576-577.

below resemble tribal levies of Antiquity. However these examples do indicate several viable ways of integrating tribal societies into the military organisation of dominant states, within a North African environment. Given the considerable continuity of Berber tribal social structure recognised by scholars today, their discussion can scarcely be irrelevant.

French colonial armies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century made considerable use of *goumiers*. This institution has been succinctly described by Porch (1984/1986, 242):

French writers sometimes compared the *goum* to a militia, but in truth it was far more like a posse. *Goumiers*, mounted on horses or camels, could range widely, sometimes for hundreds of miles, far beyond the capabilities of European troops, or Europeanized native troops like *tirailleurs* or *spahis*. However, the *goum* had several disadvantages. In the first place, it was not a force in being, but one assembled more or less hastily in response to a crime committed or a conquest sought.

On learning of a raid, against a tribe or *ksar* under French authority, the local officer of the Arab bureau would call on 'one or two of the more prominent *caids* and notables and ask them to furnish men to track down the culprits'. *Goums* might be led by French officers, but very often they were commanded by a *caid*, for fear that the presence of a French officer might unduly cramp the *goum*'s pillaging style.

The *goum* had many limitations:

as a method of policing the *goums* left much to be desired. They could not prevent crime, only retaliate for damage done. By the time a *goum* was assembled, the raiders might have an unbeatable head start. *Goums*, especially large ones, might also be very fragile coalitions of different groups or families, opposing *sofs*, *ksourians* and *Chaamba* nomads. Their cohesion often crumbled once they had ventured too far from home.

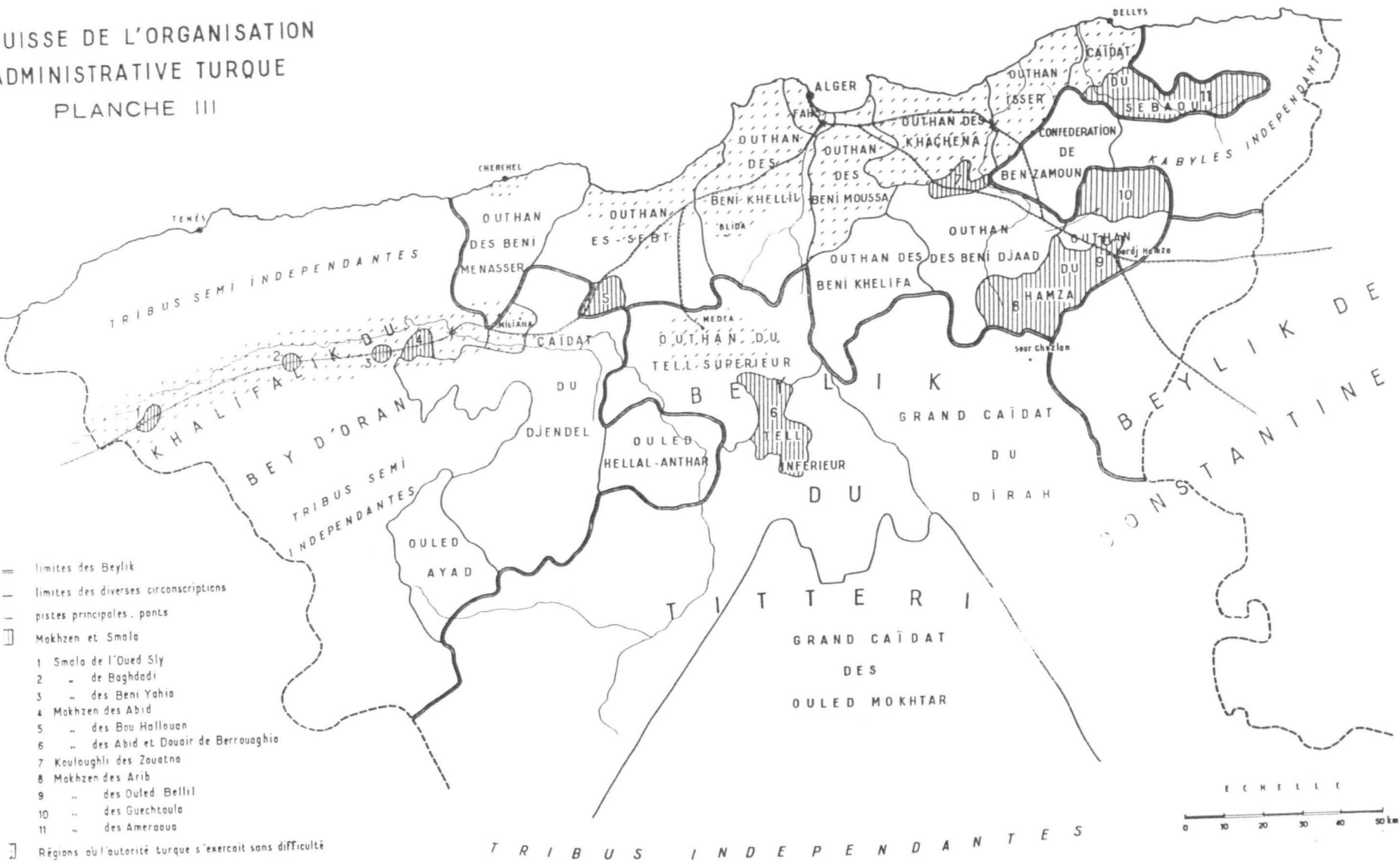
In general *goums* rarely risked the hard fighting necessary to punish a raiding party, being 'content to press them closely enough to make them abandon their stolen camels'.

Nevertheless the *goum* was a useful tool. Under some officers, notably the redoubtable Captain Theodore Pein, they achieved considerable success. It was a *goum* which was to break the resistance of the *Tuareg* in the *Hoggar*, at the battle of *Tit*. More importantly perhaps the employment of such posses harnessed the customary inter-tribal raiding to the needs of the imperial state, placed the tribesmen on the government's payroll, and in doing so helped to divert them from 'dissidence'.²²

The Maghreb states in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also possessed institutions which may be somewhat analogous to the *gentiles*. In Morocco, four tribes, designated the *guish* (or *jaysh*), were settled strategically over the country and performed military service, when called upon to do so by the Sultan, in return for exemption from taxation. They provided cavalry contingents, for policing operations or tax collecting expeditions - usually one and the

22. Tit: Porch 1984/1986, 262-267.

ETUDE DE L'ORGANISATION
ADMINISTRATIVE TURQUE
PLANCHE III



Makhzen tribes in Turkish Central Algeria

(after Boyer 1960)

same thing - mounted by the *makhzen*. A number of other quasi-*guish* tribes performed more strictly limited services for the government and did not benefit from the privileges conferred on the *guish* proper.²³

The Turkish Regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli also had their *makhzen* tribes, for example the Tunisian Dride, charged with maintaining order and collecting taxes. Again the punitive expedition was the principal instrument of achieving both those goals. In the Algerian Beylik of Titteri the two *makhzen* tribes, the Douair and Abid, supplied a permanent contingent totalling 600 men for use in local policing. Armed contingents might also be levied from certain of the governed, 'raia' tribes.²⁴

Algiers also used client tribes. Possessing considerable autonomy these acted as buffer states against the warlike, unsubdued tribes of the mountains and steppe. Thus the Caïdat of Ouled Moktar surveyed the High Plateaux and protected the Tell from the raids of the nomadic Ouled Naïl. Similarly, in southern Tunisia the Ouederna-Ouerghemma confederation in theory formed a *makhzen* tribe, acting as border guards for the Beylik of Tunis, and were not subject to taxation. In this case the Bey had little option, even if a military expedition to collect taxes in the Jeffara had been feasible it would scarcely have brought in enough to cover its own costs. The French protectorate administration initially (1881-1888) retained and strengthened the *makhzen* tribes in southern Tunisia, attempting to convert them into a more reliable institution. They were to serve alongside the 'cavaliers guides' (individual tribesmen recruited to act as messengers, scouts, and as escorts for officers of the *Service des Renseignements* - later the *Service des Affaires Indigenes*). The experiment was not found satisfactory and the tribes' special status was abolished in 1888, their place being taken by a more regular, locally recruited force of *mokhaznis*. However *goums* continued to find much employment in southern Tunisia.²⁵

Another much looser arrangement, similar to that in pre-colonial southern Tunisia, has been highlighted by Dunn (1977, 148-150), who has drawn attention to the long-standing alliance and cooperation between the Sharifian Sultan and the powerful Doui Menia (or Dawi Mani') tribe in south-west Morocco. The Doui Menia were not a *guish* tribe. The sultan had no real temporal authority over the confederation, but he

23. For *guish* tribes see Hoffman 1967, 113-114; Gellner 1969, 3-4; Julien 1970, 230; Montagne 1973, 14-17; Abun-Nasr 1987, 230; and Porch 1987, 98. The four principal tribes comprise the Cherarda, Cheraga, Oudaya and Bouakhar; each could in theory provide several sections (*reha*) of 500 men each.

24. For the *makhzen* tribes of the Turkish Regencies see Julien 1970, 293, 304 & 325, Abun-Nasr 1987, 177 and Boyer 1960, 15-47, esp. pp.17 & 31.

Cf. Salama 1984, 136, who explicitly compares their operation, on the High Plateaux, south of the main Turkish garrisons in the Tell, with Roman deployment along the *nova praetentura*.

25. For the allied tribes in Algeria see Boyer 1960, 24-25 & 31.

The fullest discussion of the Ouederna-Ouerghemma *makhzen* tribes in southern Tunisia is provided by Martel 1960; and 1965 I, 326-329; see also Louis 1979, 37; and Joffe 1984, 118-119. For the *cavaliers guides*: Martel 1963; and for the 'makhzen permanent' (after 1888): Martel 1966.

could invest members of the tribal leadership with prestigious government titles, like *caid*, in return gaining a means of exerting some military influence in the region.

III.3.1 Assessment

The extensive incorporation of African tribes into the irregular military forces of more recent regional powers demonstrates this practice was not unique to the Later Roman Empire. Additionally the great diversity encompassed by these modern African examples, from *guish* caste groups settled on designated lands like military colonists to *goumier* volunteer posses, might conceivably be paralleled amongst the *gentiles* of the Roman period. The majority of *gentiles* were perhaps closest to *goumiers*, some institutional focus and permanence being supplied by *praefecti gentium*. Some may have been compelled to furnish a specified number of young recruits for military service, either locally or abroad. The federate agreements Rome conducted with peripheral tribes perhaps resemble those between later governments and their 'agents', the Ouederna and especially the Doui Menia. Further, relations with individual groups may have varied over time, as imperial power waxed and waned and even according to the energy and competence of particular officers. The implications of these observations will be explored in the next chapter.

III.4 GENTILES: CONCLUSION

The above analysis demonstrates that the *gentiles* did not take the place of *limitanei*. *Gentiles* were simply members of African tribes. Like the *civitates*, tribal communities incorporated within the diocese had to help meet the logistical needs of the army. *CTH* VII xv 1 shows that in at least one area the *gentiles* had been allocated specific responsibility for maintaining and supporting a *fossatum*. This probably reflects a more general duty to build and repair all military infrastructure on tribal territory, and to furnish supplies for local garrisons or for troops campaigning in their region, obligations hinted at by several inscriptions and two passages in Ammianus.²⁶

In addition, tribes furnished irregular auxiliaries, presumably raised by their *praefecti gentium* at the request of local commanders, to reinforce the regular soldiers of the *limes* during a crisis or a punitive operation. There is no evidence that these 'auxiliares' were a permanent frontier force standing guard in the fortifications of the frontier zone. Quite the reverse; the *gentiles* were doubtless only mobilised for the duration of a campaign and, on its completion, would return to their fields and pastures.

These obligations are not so very different from those imposed on citizens of municipal communities. The latter also

26. For discussion of the inscriptions referred to, which apparently concern the building of official fortifications by private individuals, at least some of whom appear to be tribal leaders, see Appendix K.

had to provide for the upkeep of military fortifications, in cash, building materials and labour corvees. They had to provide supplies for the army. Finally, as citizens of the Empire they were liable for military service if necessary, imposed through conscription. These charges were all exacted through the complex Late Roman fiscal apparatus whereby land, people and livestock were assessed as uniform fiscal units. Actual responsibility for tax collection was devolved on to the shoulders of the decurions, the latter in turn being assisted by civic officials, such as *tabularii* who kept the tax registers and issued the demand notes to the individual citizens.²⁷

In contrast it is questionable whether even a formal census was needed to extract similar obligations from the tribes. The imperial authorities need not intervene within a tribe at all. Instructions could be issued to the collective tribal leadership - labelled *principes* or *optimates* - via the medium of the *praefecti gentium*, whose responsibility it would be to see that the levies were raised, and in the right numbers, that the supplies arrived and that repair work to forts and roads was carried out. The total burden could then be parcelled out to each sub-tribe, clan, village and ultimately to each individual *gentilis* at successive meetings of chiefs, of clan representatives and at local assemblies.²⁸

Sedentary North African farming communities had long experience of sharing out such communal duties amongst their individual members, experience gained through the need to maintain irrigation systems. More particularly, segmentary tribal societies are structured precisely to ensure that no group gained unfair advantage and, thereby, excessive power. At every level, each individual, group and ultimately tribe was balanced by others of equal weight, who would see that none evaded their share of the exactions and thus ensure the system worked reasonably equitably. All the imperial government needed was a general idea of the relative size and wealth of each tribe. It may have been a rough and ready tool, but it was well-suited to the tribal communities, obviating the need for elaborate paperwork or bureaucratic employees.²⁹

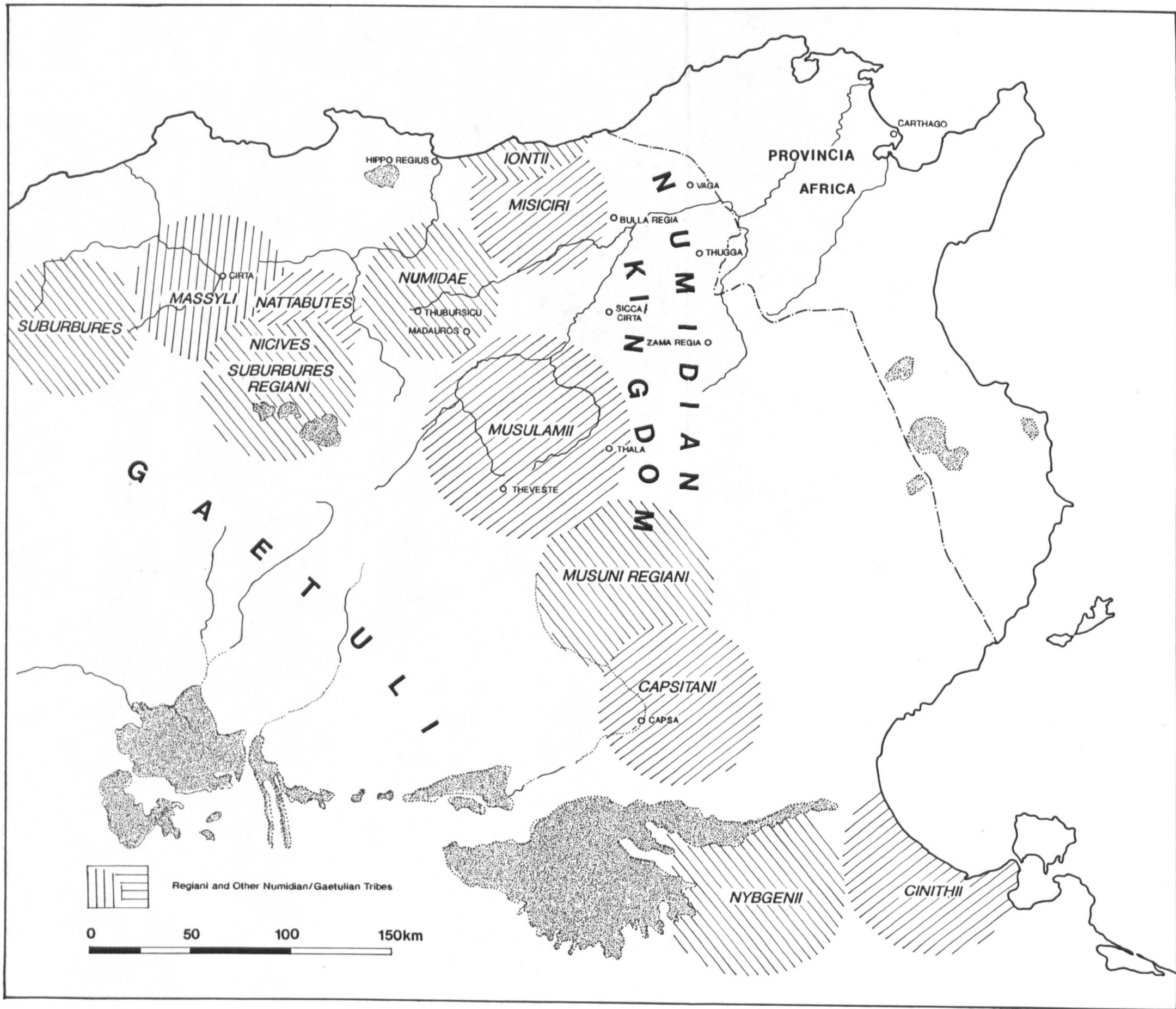
27. In Africa the *centuria* (200 *iugera*) was the unit of land assessment, whilst there may have been a separate cash poll tax, levied on both the rural and urban population, cf. Jones *LRE*, 62-63, 453-454 & 1077-1078, and 1974, 169, 170 n.98, 183. For curial tax collectors see Jones 1940, 333, and *LRE*, 456, 727-8 & 1192. For the duties of the *tabularii*: Jones *LRE*, 456 & 600.

28. For further discussion of *praefecti gentium* see sections IV.1.3 and VIII.3.3.

29. See Gellner 1969, 41-69, for the 'balance' and 'opposition' in segmentary societies; also Montagne 1973, 36-42 (for *leff* alliances); Evans-Pritchard 1949, 59-60; Whittaker 1978, 333. Dunn 1977, 62-66, 192-193 & 264-265 reveals the actual operation of such systems in the historical reality of late 19th century south-west Morocco.

For the evidence for Berber tribal segmentation in Antiquity: Euzennat 1974, 184-185; Whittaker 1978, 333 & 343-344; Fentress 1979, 45-47; Mattingly 1984, 59-68.

For communal construction of irrigated field-terraces by tribes in the High Atlas during the modern era see Berques 1955, 105-108. For the operation of a similar method of tax assessment elsewhere in the Roman world compare the method used to assess mountain or pasture land in *The Syrian Law Book*, cited in Lewis & Reinhold 1966, 462.



The Numidian Kingdom and Gaetulan Tribes

(Based on Camps 1960, Fig.20)

CHAPTER IV

GENTILES: ORIGINS, DISTRIBUTION AND SURVIVALIV.1 THE ORIGINS OF THE *GENTILES*' MILITARY OBLIGATIONS

It would be a mistake to consider *Gentiles* to be some weird institution peculiar to the Later Roman Empire. Their bland name - 'tribesmen' - belies any attempt to label them with a capital letter in that fashion. The extensive incorporation of African tribes into the irregular military forces of Mediterranean states during the Modern era, has already been noted in section III.3, but that by no means exhausts the list of parallel cases. In fact, as Shaw (1982, 37-43) has shown, such incorporation is the characteristic response of central governments confronted by pastoral nomads in arid zone environments. This has important implications for our understanding of the origins of the *gentiles*' military obligations.

IV.1.1 Tribal Society and the African States

I would argue that the *gentiles*' military duties can be traced back to the institutions of the pre-Roman states in North Africa. The Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms can both be characterised as a governed territorial core, including the cities and loyal tribes, surrounded by a large hegemonical zone of dependent allies, mostly Gaetulian or Moorish tribes. The peripheral tribes supplied irregular troops and perhaps occasionally tribute, imposed if necessary through punitive expeditions and various inducements to the tribal leaders. Carthage had similar authority over the pastoral tribes on its borders.¹

It is interesting to compare the above with the structure of Sharifian Morocco, succinctly described by Gellner (1969, 3) as forming three concentric circles:

the Inner Circle of tribes who extracted the taxes, the Middle Circle of tribes who had taxes extracted from them, and the Outer Circle of tribes who did not allow taxes to be extracted from them. In other words, there were the sheep-dogs, the sheep, and the wolves.

The governed lands of the inner and middle circles are the *bled makhzen*, those of the outer circle, the *bled siba* - 'the land of dissidence'.²

1. Mattingly 1983B, 160; Shaw 1982, 38-39. Berthier 1981, puts forward a stimulating case that the Numidian kingdom should be reduced in scale, but his arguments apply only to the core as Mattingly rightly perceives.

Volumes V, VII and VIII of Gsell's monumental *Histoire Ancien de l'Afrique du Nord (HAAN)*, and Camps 1960 are still the basic works on relations between the African kingdoms and Berber tribes.

2. Gellner 1969, 1-5 for discussion of concepts of *makhzen* and *siba*. *Makhzen* literally signifies 'storehouse' but became the ubiquitous term for 'government' and everything associated with it in the Maghreb.

Fentress (1982, 330-334) argues that the *Gaetuli* were in structural opposition to the Numidians, in other words they were *siba* to the Numidian *makhzen*. This is doubtless the case. It was presumably the existence of a degree of dissidence which ensured the Gaetulians were not absorbed into the core of the Numidian state, but that does not mean the Numidian kings were without any power in the Gaetulan periphery. Although they did not govern the *Gaetuli*, the Numidian monarchy may well have ruled there, in the sense that their dominion was recognised and auxiliaries provided. It would be a mistake to adopt too slavishly the model of the later Sharifian state in Morocco, whereby the Sultan had only spiritual authority within the *bled siba*, being able to influence but not direct events. Jugurtha, for example, had great personal authority amongst the *Gaetuli* and was able to find refuge and raise new armies there. The post-Jugurthan circumstances, to which Fentress particularly refers, reflect a situation in which the prestige of the Numidian state had been undermined by continual Roman intervention, and Gaetulan dissidence proportionately emboldened.³

One possible mechanism enabling the Numidian royalty to extend its authority into Gaetulia has been explored by Camps (1960, 252-254) and Fentress (1979, 51). Both suggest that the label *Regiani*, applied to two tribes (the *Suburbures* and *Musuni*) during the Roman period, may signify that they had been royal or government tribes in the Numidian kingdom. Like the *makhzen* tribes of Sharifian Morocco or Turkish Algeria, the *Regiani* would have provided contingents for the royal army and exacted tribute from less privileged groups. The location of the *regiani* tribes, towards the outer edge of the Numidian core may point to a role as policemen in Gaetulia, poachers turned gamekeepers perhaps. Other interpretations of this label can be proposed so the above remains only a tentative hypothesis, but one sufficiently attractive to merit consideration in relation to other intriguing tribal names, particularly in Mauretania.⁴

3. See esp. Fentress 1982, 332: 'What seems clear is that Gaetuli are distinct from Numidians, and define themselves as opposed to them'.

The territory and influence of the Moroccan *makhzen* likewise oscillated according to the energy and ability of the individual sultans, cf. Julien 1970, 220-272; Abun-Nasr 1987, 228-247; Dunn 1977, 46-48 & 146-175.

4. The *Suburbures Regiani*: Lancel 1955; Berthier 1968; Desanges 1962, 135-136 ('*Suburbures*'). The *Musunii Regiani*: Desanges 1962, 121 ('*Musuni*') and Desanges 1976-1978.

For the location of the *regiani* tribes in relation to the Numidian core and Gaetulia see Camps 1960, fig.27 facing p.252.

Although Camps 1960, 253, felt the tribes might be so called because they were administered by royal functionaries, or occupied royal land, he nevertheless insisted the label demonstrated first and foremost a privileged relationship of the tribes with the monarchy, in other words the prototype of Gellner's 'sheepdogs' rather than his 'sheep'.

Desanges 1976-1978, 127, likewise suggested the label *regiani* might signify a particularly close relationship between the tribes, or tribal fractions, and the Massylian dynasty of the Numidian kingdom; cf. also Desanges 1962, 121; Desanges 1964; Gsell HAAN V, 213; and Benabou 1976, 436.

Alternatively the title might designate dominant mobile nomadic clans within a wider tribal grouping which included subordinate sedentary tenant-farming segments. The latter could be the explain the *Suburbures col(oni?)* who also appear in the epigraphic sources: BCTH 1917, 342-343 (Gsell) = AE 1917-1918, 45, dated to 199; and CIL VIII 8270; cf. also BCTH 1895, 310, AAA 17,214 & 17,246.

The *Mazices*, in the hinterland of the Mauretanian royal capital of Iol-Caesarea form a promising candidate. Their title, based on the root MZG or MZK, denotes the 'noble' or 'free ones', like the modern Berber term *Imazighen* (plur.). It is encountered throughout North Africa, so much so as to suggest it was used by the Berbers as a general label for themselves. In this context, however, it is clearly associated with a distinct tribe (or perhaps tribal confederation) located over a long period in the same region, the Bou Maad and Zaccar mountain chains behind Cherchel, and the Dahra, further west. It may be more than coincidence that Ptolemy places another group of *Mazices* close to Tingi, capital of the second Mauretanian province, and perhaps formerly another royal centre. The designation of these tribes as 'noble' may be a relic of their relationship to Mauretanian monarchy. They perhaps helped to enforce the government's authority within the kingdom. Their location would serve as a protective screen for the capitals and render them well placed to join punitive expeditions. Desanges (1976-1978, 126 n.25) suggests that the '*Mazicum reg(ionis) Montens(is)*', mentioned in a legionary centurion's epitaph at Lambaesis, should be read *Mazicum reg(iani) Montens(ium)*. If valid this interpretation would establish an explicit link between the *regiani* tribes and the *Mazices*.⁵

IV.1.2 Government and Tribes during the Principate

Rome inherited this authority over the tribes from the Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms and reinforced it by extensive campaigning during the Julio-Claudian period. L.Cornelius Balbus, Cossus Cornelius Lentulus, Suetonius Paulinus, Hosidius Geta and the like, all led forces deep into the interior well beyond the directly administered zones. Since these campaigns resulted in little formal territorial acquisition, it is reasonable to suppose that their intention was to gain the submission of the peripheral tribes. The more remote Gaetulian communities in the south-west were apparently assigned to the Mauretanian kingdom of Juba II perhaps in the aftermath of Balbus' extensive forays, but Rome remained their ultimate overlord.⁶

Military Service

5. *Mazices* of Caesariensis: Leveau 1973, 171-175; also Desanges 1962, 63. The Tingitanian homonym: Desanges 1962, 34 'Masikes'; Euzennat 1974, 177; Rebuffat 1974, 460-462; Euzennat 1984, 376. For the title as a general label signifying 'Berber' see Gsell HAAN V, 115-120; Camps 1960, 26-29; Desanges 1962, 34, 63 & 112-113.

Mazices reg(iani) Montens(es): CIL VIII 2786; cf. Leveau 1984, 496 n.63 and Le Bohec 1989A, 170.

6. For general discussion see Lawless 1970 I, 93-94, Rebuffat 1982B, 491-492, Mattingly 1984, 164-166 & 207-209, and 1989, 136. Balbus' campaign: Desanges 1957, and 1978, 189-195; Cornelius Lentulus and the Nasamones: Desanges 1969; Suetonius and Geta in Mauretania: De La Chapelle 1934.

See Desanges 1964, for the Gaetulian territory of Juba II. Mauretanian client kings in action: Fishwick 1971, 474 & 477-478 and Fishwick & Shaw 1976, 493 (citing Tacitus *Annals* IV 24-26), stressing the important role played Ptolemy, and his forces, in the suppression of Tacfarinas.

Compare Wells' (1972, 248) comments on the parallel case of Augustan Germany: 'Roman control extended as far as her arm could reach; and the army was very mobile'. See also Luttwak 1976, 20-40 (esp. pp.32-38).

MOORISH CAVALRY



Trajans Column(after Speidel 1975)



Augustus at Nablus (after Speidel
1975)

.... within North Africa

Thus as early as the third quarter of the first century AD bands of Moorish tribesmen were serving alongside the provincial armies of Tingitana and Caesariensis. Tacitus records that in AD 68 Lucceius Albinus, Otho's governor of both the Mauretaniae, had at his disposal not only the nineteen cohorts and five *alae* of the combined provincial armies but also an '*ingens Maurorum numerus*', who formed 'a band which robbery and brigandage had trained for war'.⁷

It is doubtful that the huge force had been suddenly recruited by Albinus himself, and very unlikely that the Moors had been attracted to Albinus' cause because he was allegedly planning to make himself king of Mauretania. There is no evidence that the Moorish tribesmen had any sentimental attachment to the Hellenised monarchy of Juba and Ptolemy. The *ingens numerus* was at Albinus' disposal because of agreements or treaties made with the imperial government which obliged Moorish tribes to place bands of their warriors in the service of Rome.

Earlier still friendly tribesmen were present in the army which Gn. Hosidius Geta led against the Moorish chieftain Salabus, during the campaigns to consolidate the Mauretanian provinces. This is revealed by Dio's account of the incredible incident which rescued the Roman force from disaster and so impressed Salabus that he came to terms with the new power. It was 'one of the natives who were at peace with the invaders' (ie. the Romans), doubtless the chieftain of a band of tribal auxiliaries, who suggested to Geta the prayers and rituals which were credited with producing the miraculous rainstorm.⁸

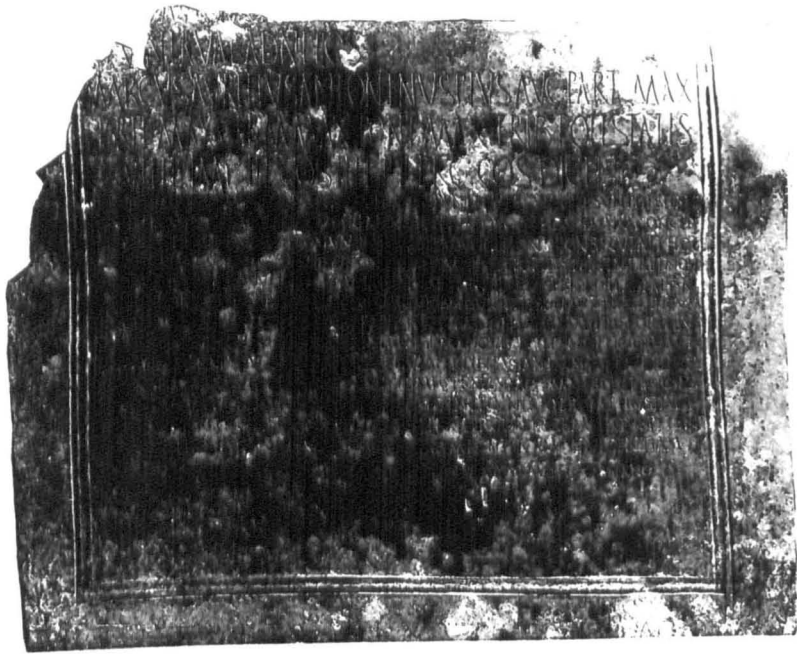
Indeed, it is likely that all Roman armies, operating in the region, equipped themselves with a screen of local tribesmen to act as guides, scouts and skirmishers.

.... outside the region

North African tribesmen also served in Roman armies on other frontiers, particularly as light cavalry. Perhaps the most famous instance was the large force raised by Lusius Quietus, to support Trajan's Dacian campaigns, but Quietus' Moors were not an isolated example. Speidel (1975A, 208-221) has conveniently assembled references revealing the continuous employment of Moorish troops during the second and third centuries. Thus, under Antoninus Pius, contingents of *Mauri gentiles* and *Mauri equites...* can be found in Dacia Superior and Moesia Superior. These were perhaps later split into the *numeri* which are recorded at several Dacian forts. The Moors played an especially prominent role from the reign of Severus onwards. They provided a key element in the developing

7. Tacitus Hist. II, 58: '*Decem novem cohortes, quinque alae, ingens Maurorum numerus aderat, per latrocinia et raptus apta bello manus*'. This the earliest indication of the size of the Mauretanian garrison.

8. Dio, LX 9.



Caracalla's Mauretanian Edict

(After IAM II)

imperial field army, as both infantry and cavalry, constantly attracting the praise of authors such as Dio, Herodian and Zosimus.⁹

System of Recruitment

Of great interest are the various proposals as to how these Moors were recruited. Speidel (1975A, 209-210) suggested that the *Mauri gentiles* and *Mauri equites* in Dacia and Moesia were tribesmen exacted from rebellious populations conquered in Antoninus Pius Mauretanian war. Southern (1989, 93) agrees the *Mauri gentiles* were an enforced levy but follows Mann (1985, 218) in considering that the *equites*, who were granted citizenship on discharge, were raised as allies during the same revolt, and later transferred to the Danube. Others, it is argued, entered imperial service voluntarily, attracted by the pay and prospects. Those who followed Lusius Quietus have naturally been placed in this category. To quote Speidel (1975A, 212):

Independent Moorish horsemen under their Sheikh Lusius Quietus joined Trajan as free allies in his Dacian and Parthian Wars.

Dio (LXVIII xxxii 4-5) explicitly states that Quietus came to Trajan of his own accord.

I would argue that all these levies take place within the framework of the imperial hegemony over African tribes outlined above. It is likely that the tribesmen were less willing to fight far from home. Recruitment would obviously have run a lot smoother if a loyal and renowned chieftain took over its organisation, as Quietus, on his own initiative, appears to have done. It may have been a similar attempt to levy warrior bands for service abroad which sparked off Pius' Mauretanian war. The operation perhaps provoked some peripheral Moorish tribes to throw off Roman authority, signalling their rejection of the makhzen's overlordship by raiding communities under direct imperial administration.¹⁰

At any rate by the third century the government had established effective arrangements ensuring a steady supply of fighting men from the African frontier zone. The Caracallan edict posted at Banasa in 216, proclaiming a remission of tax arrears, explicitly cites the contributions of '*viris fortibus*', made by the area benefitting (Tingitana or perhaps both Mauretaniae?), as one of the justifications for the emperor's generosity. Cassius Dio (LXXIX xxxii 1) actually asserts that the Moorish troops in the army of Caracalla and Macrinus, were sent 'in fulfilment of the terms of the alliance', whilst Herodian (VII ii 1), discussing the Moorish

9. Speidel 1975A, 208-221, provides full references to the ancient and epigraphic sources; cf. also Southern 1989, 92-94 and Christol 1988, 323-324 nn.89-90.

For Lusius Quietus' Moors see Dio LXVIII xxxii and SHA Hadr. V 8.

For the *Mauri gentiles* in *Dacia Superiore*: CIL XVI 108. They were stiffened by *vexillarii Africae et Mauretaniae Caesariensis*, regulars from the African and Mauretanian armies. The *Mauri equites*: CIL XVI 114.

10. For examples of revolts sparked by attempts to levy troops see Isaac 1990, 59.

spearman and Osrhoenian and Armenian archers in Maximinus' German expeditionary force, notes some 'were there as subjects and others under the terms of a friendly alliance'.¹¹

IV.1.3 Tribal categories: subjects and allies

Herodian's comments underline the important point that we are dealing with two separate but related categories here. On the one hand there were groups labelled 'allies' (federates might be an acceptable alternative), located beyond the directly ruled provinces, and on the other hand tribal communities encapsulated within the formal territory of the Empire. The latter were Roman subjects, bound by Roman laws, and after 213 were probably all Roman citizens, despite the doubts of Mattingly (1984, 182). They were administered by *praefecti gentium*, initially either local army officers, equestrian officials or magistrates belonging to nearby *civitates*, whichever was most convenient. By the Late Empire the prefecture had been annexed by the tribal aristocracy itself. It is this second category of tribe which is referred to by *CTH* VII xv 1 and similar sources. The terms used by Dio, *symmachia* and *symmachikon*, might suggest he was referring to the former category of federate clients or dependent allies, rather than the provincial tribes. However, *symmachiarii* is a notoriously vague term. One Spanish career inscription mentions a *praefectus symmachiariorum Asturum belli Dacici*. The Asturians must have been subject to provincial government for at least 100 years prior to their contribution of *symmachiarii*, whichever Dacian war is signified.¹²

A further point should also be emphasised. Both the above categories persisted until the end of Roman Africa, but neither had a permanent, unchanging complement. As the Roman army rolled forward tribes which had previously merely been under hegemoniacal authority were incorporated into the formal provincial structure and still more remote peoples brought under Roman dominance. Rome was unique in the extent to which it actually sought to and succeeded in encapsulating peripheral tribal groupings. Shaw (1982, 39) notes:

Were punitive raiding, and this is all the Hellenistic states seemed willing and able to do, was not sufficient to encapsulate the nomadic groups completely.

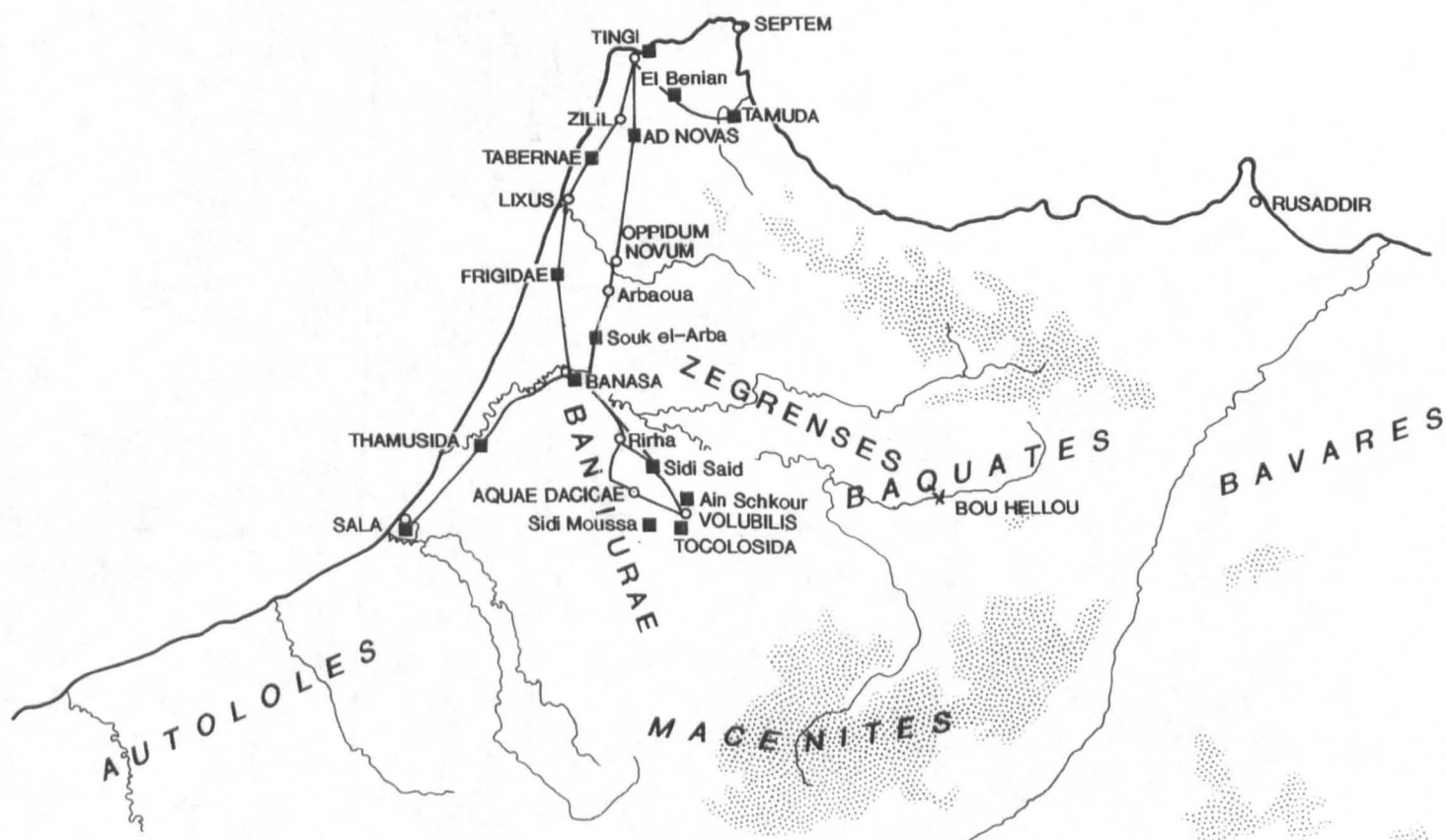
11. Caracalla's remission of tax arrears: *IAM* II 100; cf. Thouvenot 1946; Guey 1947; Thouvenot 1950; Corbier 1977; Christol 1988, 323-327 (esp. 323-324); Di Vita-Evrard 1988.

The combined infantry and cavalry unit, the *equites itemque pedites Mauri iuniores*, recorded as part of the imperial *comitatus* in a couple of early third century inscriptions (*CIL* VIII 20996 = *ILS* 1356, and *AE* 1966, 596), surely represents this permanent force.

The label 'Mauri iuniores', rather than implying a corresponding unit of *seniores*, might denote young recruits, like the *iuniores Bessi* drafted from Thrace to reinforce the garrison of Mauretania Tingitana at roughly the same time; cf. Speidel 1977.

12. Dio *LXVIII* xxxii 4: 'Mauron symmachias'; *LXXIX* xxxii 1: 'kata to symmachikon'.

For *symmachiarii* see Southern 1989, 88. C. Sulpicius Ursulus and the *symmachiarii Astures*: *AE* 1926, 88 = 1935, 12, cf. also *AE* 1985, 719. See Birley 1976, 68 and Le Bohec 1989A, 132 for recent discussion of this career inscription. Dacian wars were fought under Domitian, Trajan, Commodus and Maximinus Thrax, those of Commodus and Trajan being the most favoured candidates.



The Province of Mauretania Tingitana

In other words only Rome was to transform significant numbers of 'allies' into subject *gentiles* or into *civitates*.

Mauretania Tingitana

There was one area of North Africa where Roman forces did not push forward to establish direct control over new peoples, namely Mauretania Tingitana. Consequently, after the initial organisation of the province, progressive encapsulation of tribes is not found there. Not only was Tingitana territorially static but also it was a relatively small frontier province. Moreover, it has produced a good number of highly informative epigraphic documents illuminating the relationship between government and tribes. This combination effectively creates a simplified stable model, which is useful in interpreting the evidence from other more complex and 'dynamic' provinces, during the Principate.

The structure of Tingitana may be characterised as comprising three elements - cities, provincial tribes and 'symmachia' tribes. A small inner core of cities lay in the north-western Moroccan plain, the Rharb. The settlements were linked by a simple road network, leading from *Tingi* to *Sala* and *Volubilis*, along which the garrisons of the provincial army were stationed. Surrounding this was a ring of tribes under direct rule. The *Tabula Banasitana* shows that the *Zegrenses* fell into this category. The *Baniurae* form another plausible candidate. These two may be placed east of *Banasa*, north and south of the Oued Sebou, respectively.¹³

Beyond the directly administered zone lay an outer ring of client tribes. Attention is focussed on this group by a renowned series of dedications from *Volubilis*, which commemorate *colloquia* between Tingitanian governors and successive paramount chiefs of the Baquatian *gens* (or *gentes*). Later examples also explicitly celebrate the confirmation of peace ('*pacis firmandae causa aram consecravit*' or similar). The 'altars' doubtless reflect the routine operation of the

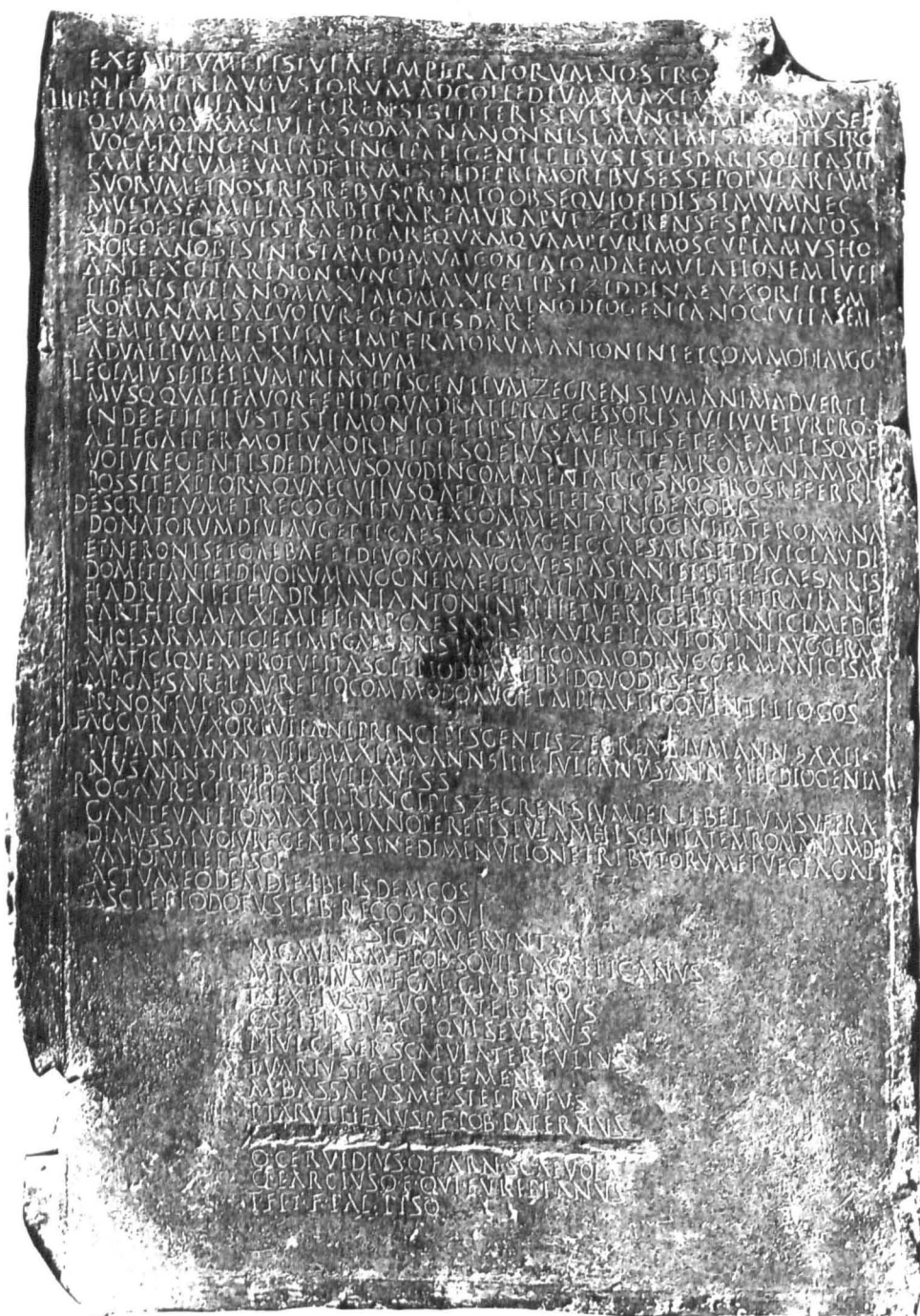
13. The different relationship of the two tribal categories, exemplified by the *Zegrenses* and the *Baquates*, towards the Roman state have as elucidated in the most recent discussion by Christol 1988, 305-315, with full bibliography.

For geographical discussion of Tingitanian cities see Rebuffat 1967; Euzennat 1989B.

For comparable surveys of Tingitanian tribes: Desanges 1962, 27-40; Euzennat 1974; Rebuffat 1974A; Euzennat 1984, 376-378; drawing mainly on Ptolemy IV i 5. Each recorded name is thought to represent a distinct tribal group. See Fentress 1979, 43-47; and Mattingly 1984, 54-68, for a more sophisticated overall conception that different levels within segmentary societies may often be designated (to say nothing of the possible use of dichronic sources by the geographers).

The Tingitanian road system: Euzennat 1962, and now Akerraz & Rebuffat 1991, 377-379, 405-408. For the military infrastructure in the south of the province see now Euzennat 1989A. For the army's extensive reach beyond the occupied core see Thouvenot 1973-1975; Rebuffat 1979, 235-247; Rebuffat 1982B, 485-492, 496-501, & 508-509.

The *Zegrenses*: Euzennat 1974. For a comparable study of the *Baniurae* see Rebuffat 1974A. See also Desanges 1962, 27-28 & 40. Provincial administration of the *Zegrenses* is demonstrated by the *Tabula Banasitana*'s careful stipulation, when awarding citizenship to members of a Zegrensian noble dynasty during the reign of Marcus Aurelius: '*sine diminutione tributorum et vect[i]galium populi et fisci*'; cf. IAM II 94, and Christol 1988, 309-311.



Tabula Banasitana

(after IAM 11)

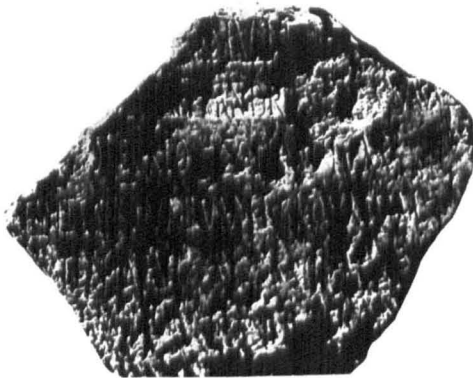
THE VOLUBILIS 'ALTARS'



Pacis Firmandae

IAM II 358

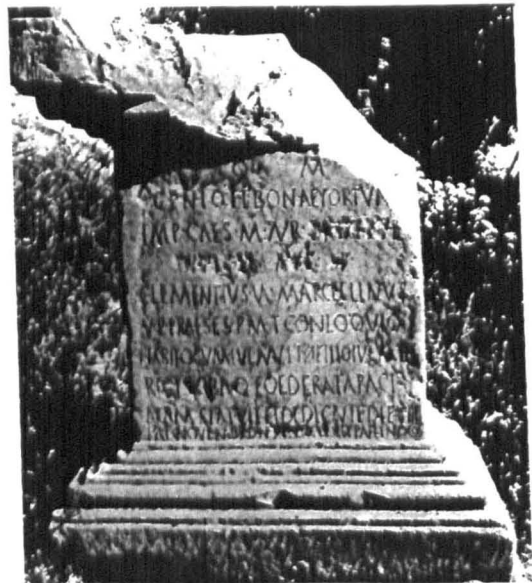
(after IAM II.)



——— SALVTE ———
 ——— ERI ALEXANDRI ——— AVG
 ——— PROLEGATO COLLOQVIVM
 ——— GENTIS BAVARVM ET BAQVATVM
 5 ——— NTEA HABVIT ARAMQVE
 ——— MAXIM ——— M

IAM II 402

(after IAM II.)



IAM II 360

by
symmachia referred to Dio and Herodian. The *Baquates*, most likely inhabited the territory stretching east of *Volubilis*, as far as the banks of the Moulouya, notably the valleys of the Upper Sebou, the Oued Inaouene, the Taza gap, and perhaps the eastern Rif. Occasionally associated with the *Baquates* are the *Macenites*, who should probably be located in the Middle Atlas and Zaer-Zaiane country south of the province, and the *Bavares* of western *Caesariensis*. Finally there were of course tribes outside any Roman control, amongst which the *Autololes/Autoteles* (Ait Ilal..?), on the Moroccan, Atlantic plain south of Rabat, should perhaps be included.¹⁴

The relationship between the client tribes and the Roman state may be further defined by two additional observations. The 'altars' at *Volubilis* demonstrate that each Baquatian paramount chief effectively required Roman confirmation. The dates of the inscriptions bear no relation to the accession of any emperors. It was the installation of a new Baquatian *princeps* which apparently triggered the diplomatic *conloquia* and renewal of the alliance. The failure of a newly selected chieftain to present himself before the Roman authorities in the customary manner would presumably have provoked the launch of a punitive expedition against the tribe's territory. It follows that the meeting with the governor at *Volubilis* was an essential stage in the accession of a Baquatian paramount chief. Secondly, both the *Baquates* and the *Bavares* actually resided within the formal limits of the Mauretanian provinces. The *flumen Malva* (the Moulouya surely, rather than the Oued Kiss), which separated the *Baquates* and *Bavares* according to Julius Honorius, was also the traditional boundary between Tingitana and *Caesariensis*. The *Macenites*, too, were perhaps theoretically included within the bounds of Tingitana. Pliny even indicates that the *Autololes* were so considered in the first century.¹⁵

14. The *Baquates* and the diplomatic dedications: Carcopino 1943, 258-275; Frezouls 1957; Desanges 1962, 28-31; Romanelli 1962; Lemosse 1971; Sherwin-White 1973, 88-89 & 97; Benabou 1976, 144-147, 154-155, 212-214, 229-231, 458-461 & 464-466; Sigman 1977, 429-434; Frezouls 1980, 75-82; Frezouls 1981, 48-50; Euzennat 1984, 378-379; Mattingly 1984, 65-68, 181-182; Di Vita-Evrard 1987, 200-208; Christol 1988, 305-315. The texts in chronological order: IAM II 348, 384, 349, 350, 356, 402, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361.

Macenites linked with *Baquates*: IAM II 384, 'Ucmetio principe gentium Macennitum et Baquatium' (173/175).

Bavares and *Baquates*: IAM II 402 (Severus Alexander).

The *Macenites*: Camps 1955, 250; Desanges 1962, 33-34.

The *Bavares*: Camps 1955; Desanges 1962, 46-48.

The *Autololes*: Frezouls 1957, 99-102; Desanges 1962, 208-210, 215-216; Sigman 1977, 426-429; Euzennat 1984, 378; Christol 1988, 311.

Autololes and Sala: Pliny NH V i 5; cf. IAM II 307 and Euzennat 1989A, 159-173.

15. The most thoughtful overview of the boundaries of Tingitana and conditions outside the occupied zone may be found in Rebuffat 1982B, 485-489, 496-509; cf. also Thouvenot 1973-1975, and Rebuffat 1979, 235-247. For eastern Tingitana see also Marion 1960; Thouvenot 1962A, and 1962B; and especially Rebuffat 1971, and Euzennat 1978. For Mauretania south of the occupied zone cf. Thouvenot 1946; 1957; Rebuffat 1974C, and 1982B, 502-508.

Julius Honorius (GLM p.53 recension A): 'Fluvius Malva... intercludens inter Barbaros et Bacuates'. The Barbaros are the western *Bavares*, cf. Camps 1955, 249-250, 267-269 & 288 document XV.

The provincial boundary: Itin Ant XII 1-2: 'flumen Malva dirimit Mauretania duas'; also Ptolemy IV i 4, and Pliny NH V i 19; cf. Euzennat 1978, 328 n.79.

For the *Macenites* cf. Itin Ant II 2-3: 'a Tingi Mauretania, ubi Bacuates et Macenites barbari morantur'.

It is not difficult to understand why so much of Tingitana was left under the control of client tribes, throughout the Principate. Outside the province's governed zone much of the land is rugged mountain or parched steppe. The broad Moulouya basin in particular is a region of pronounced aridity, in effect a pre-desert salient intruding northwards. Moreover, Tingitana might be labelled the 'wild west' of the Roman world, a remote land of tall tales and ferocious beasts. It was therefore an unattractive candidate for military occupation and direct administration, rarely attracting imperial attention.¹⁶

Nevertheless, even if Rome did not actually attempt to govern the peoples of the steppe and mountains, those communities were still considered to be subject to imperial authority, having at some stage submitted to the will of the Roman people. Indeed, simply entering into a treaty relationship with Rome would have placed a Moorish tribe in a subordinate position, at least in Roman eyes, since the Empire recognised no equals. It was simpler, for the moment, to impose that authority only indirectly, treating the tribes and their *principes* as clients and allies. Diplomatic gifts of citizenship, bestowed on the gentile leadership, or, if necessary, punitive expeditions, would ensure the tribes remained loyal agents of Roman *pax* (a term laden with overtones of imperial dominance, as any reader of Tacitus' *Agricola* is aware). Relations with the *Baquates* and the *Bavares* would have had a special significance because those groups were presumably responsible for the security of overland communications between the governed zones of the two Mauretanian provinces. This may partially explain the unparalleled sequence of *conloquia* dedications at Volubilis, though chance survival probably also plays a part.¹⁷

Caesariensis

The frontier of Caesariensis was far from static. Initially Roman units doubtless pushed forward along the few access routes into the interior, whenever an opportunity presented itself, gradually rolling the province forward. By Hadrian's reign the garrison could be deployed along a road running virtually the length of the province but Roman authority and influence doubtless continued to penetrate southward. Eighty years later it was possible to move the army forward to second linear deployment (*nova praetentura*), doubtless enveloping many tribes which had previously been subordinate 'allies'. This new military road could scarcely have served as a line discretely separating an urbanised province from tribal *barbaricum*, the straightforward model that might be envisaged in the case of one of Rome's European frontiers. The province itself comprised a fluid patchwork of Roman colonies and

The Autololes: Pliny NH V i 17, 'Tingitanae provinciae longitudo clxx est. gentes in ea: Gaetulae nunc tenet gentes, Baniurae multoque validissimi Autoteles'.

16. Rainfall in the Moulouya basin ranges between 100-300 mm per annum, the higher levels (200-300 mm) falling in the north, see Despois 1964, map A (end of text).

17. Tacitus *Agricola* XXX 6.

municipia, peregrine *civitates*, and tribal communities, whilst the limits of Roman authority were represented by *gentes* subjected only to bonds of clientship. The latter (and perhaps also some of the provincial tribes) doubtless extended beyond the *praetentura*.¹⁸

A number of inscriptions shed some light on the relationship between tribal groups and the imperial administration in Caesariensis, though none as remarkable as those from Tingitana have been discovered yet. At Caesarea the *gens Mauror(um) Maccuum* set up a dedication to their patron, the governor T. Caesernius Statius Quinctius Macedo, procurator of Caesariensis c.107. A similar phenomenon may be represented by a dedication erected for the benefit of another procurator, P.Aelius Classicus, either early in the second century or perhaps in the third century, at Ksar Chebel in the Grande Kabylie. It has been suggested that the dedicator, one [...]lius Tyra[nnus or Tyra[nicus], was a local chieftain, but there is no direct evidence to support this assertion, although tribal society did remain strong in the Grande Kabylie. An inscription from Oppidum Novum, mentioning a *praefectus alae Thracum et gentis Mazicum*, shows the administration of a tribe might be entrusted to the local garrison commander. The practice was doubtless more common in the early years immediately after a tribe's incorporation within the province, this particular example having been tentatively assigned a Domitianic-Trajanic date. A superior official, with the title *procurator Augusti ad curam gentium*, is recorded on a career inscription from Caesarea but the scope and area of his responsibility are uncertain. Gubernatorial patrons and *praefecti gentium* clearly relate to provincial tribes, comparable to *Zegrenses*. On the other hand the *Bavares* in the far west of the province, as we have seen resemble the *Baquates*. Indeed it may have been the need to deal with two separate administrations which gave rise to the two confederations.¹⁹

Africa and Numidia

The process of encapsulation and transformation went furthest in Africa and Numidia, where pre-Roman state institutions were already more developed than in Mauretania.

18. For discussion of Roman expansion into tribal Mauretania Caesariensis see Salama 1953/1955; Cadenat 1954, 247-248; Février 1964, 38; Février 1968A; Lawless 1970, I, 91-99; Leveau 1974A; Leveau 1974B; Leveau 1975; Benabou 1976, 89-96, 109-111, 119-131, 135-144, 157-160, 173-177 & 179; Salama 1977; Leveau 1977B, 290-309; Salama 1980, 121-133; Mattingly 1984, 167-172, 180-182 & 187-189; Leveau 1984, 487-500.

19. The *Maccui* dedication: AE 1904, 150 = ILS 9008; cf. Desanges 1962, 57-60; Leveau 1975, 862; Leveau 1984, 491.

The Ksar Chebel dedication: Baghli & Février 1968, 13-15, = AE 1969-1970, 727. Mattingly 1984, 181 & 412 n.83, interprets this as the record of a meeting (*colloquium*) between the procurator, a centurion and an indigenous chieftain, but he may have misread the verb *collocare* as *colloqui*.

The military *praefectus gentis Mazicum*: Leveau 1973, 153-156 & 190-191, = AE 1973, 654; cf. Leveau 1984, 492 & 497.

The tribal procurator: CIL VIII 9327 & p.1983 = ILS 2750; cf. Pflaum 1960-1961, 736-737 nr.278, proposing an early-mid third century date. Leveau 1984, 100 & 499, suggests a fiscal role for M.Pomponius Vitellianus.

IAM II 402: [...principe] *gentis Bavarum et Baquatium*.

Numerous inscriptions attest the delimitation of tribes such as the *Musulamii*, *Musunii*, *Nybgenii* and the *Cinithii* or their supervision by Roman officers, equestrian officials or local magistrates during the first and early second centuries. Thereafter, as Fentress (1979, 77-78) has noted, those *gentes* virtually disappear from the epigraphic record of Africa and Numidia. After subjugation was completed many tribes gradually evolved into *civitates*. This was particularly likely where the community was centred on a large oasis, which could sustain urban life and institutions. For example the *Nybgenii*, located around the oases of the Nefzaoua, were probably incorporated under the Flavians. The community was already a *civitas* by Trajan's reign, when its territory was delimited, and was elevated to the rank of *municipium* (as *Turris Tamalleni*) by Hadrian in 128. In some cases a process of fission took place as sedentary *castella* broke away to form independent *civitates*. In other instances tribes were attributed to and eventually absorbed by neighbouring cities.²⁰

IV.2 DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES DURING THE LATER EMPIRE

The distribution of *gentiles* liable to perform military duties for the Late Roman state is the sum total of the many processes outlined above: imperial expansion (and occasionally retrenchment), tribal incorporation, municipalisation, survival and clientship. Literary and epigraphic references to *praefecti gentium* serve as one useful indicator of continued tribal government.²¹

IV.2.1 Mauretania Caesariensis

Most of the Late Imperial inscriptions mentioning tribal prefects derive from Mauretania Caesariensis. There is a particular concentration in the Grande Kabylie, the territory of the powerful *Quinquegentanei* confederation, where five members of the tribal aristocracy bear the title *ex praefecto gentis*, or simply *ex praefecto*. Further west, another Moorish notable appears in the role of *praefectus gentis Madicum* on an epitaph at *Zucchabar*, obviously supervising the *Mazices* ensconced in the Zaccar and Dahra ranges. A second prefect of that tribe is mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, who provides the only detailed description of late Mauretania. The historian gives the impression that tribal communities were

20. For Roman incorporation of African tribes see Benabou 1976, 427-469; Troussset 1978; Whittaker 1978, 341-350; Fentress 1979, 72-78; Lepelley 1979, I, 41-46; Mattingly 1984, 160-172, 175-180, 184-190, 205-216, 221-226 & 230-239; and now Christol 1988, (esp. 315-322; association of tribes with nearby cities, notably Gighis and the *Cinithii*).

21. The basic work on tribal geography is still Desanges' *Catalogue des tribus africaines* (1962) but see Mattingly's valuable comments (1984, 55-59 & 64-65), assessing this data in the context of Berber tribes' segmentary social structure.

The evidence for Berber tribal segmentation in Antiquity is discussed more generally by a number of recent valuable studies: Euzennat 1974, 184-185; Whittaker 1978, 333 & 343-344; Fentress 1979, 43-50; Mattingly 1984, 59-68. All use social anthropological research into modern Berber communities, notably those of the Moroccan High Atlas, undertaken by Gellner (1969), Montagne (1924, 1930A, and 1931 = 1973), Berques (1953 and 1955) and others.

widespread in *Caesariensis* and *Sitifensis*, particularly in the mountainous areas. Not all the groups he names can be firmly located, but his narrative suggests that, in addition to the areas named above, tribal society remained strongly entrenched in the *Petite Kabylie*, the *Ouarsenis*, the *Titteri* and *Bibans* ranges near *Auzia*, and the *Hodna* basin and *Saharan Atlas*.²²

IV.2.2 *Tripolitania*

Tribal institutions and social structures were similarly entrenched in *Tripolitania* during Late Antiquity, especially in the frontier zone. The province contained relatively few cities (though more than its name would suggest) and most were situated on the coast. As Mattingly (1984, 47-48) comments, in his geographical survey of *Tripolitania*, of the ten *coloniae* and *municipia* attested there only *Turris Tamalleni* and perhaps *Thubactis* lay any distance from the sea. Several other urban settlements are known which appear sizeable or important enough to suggest they were *civitates*. Again, many of these occupy coastal locations but the large sites at El Hamma (*Aquae Tacapitanae*), Mareth (*Martae?*), and at Ksar Koutine and Henchir Kedama (*Augarmi?*) may indicate the *Arad* and western *Jeffara* plains were municipalised. Some cities may have been responsible for extensive circumscriptions, most notably *Sabratha*, *Oea* and *Lepcis Magna*, whose vast *territoria* together absorbed practically all of the eastern *Jebel*. However that still leaves a great expanse of the hinterland, comprising the wadi systems of the pre-desert and the remote western and central *Jebel*, devoid of any trace of civic administration.²³

Instead, it seems likely that the bulk of the frontier zone population was still organised in social and political units based on notional kinship. These would have been tribes and clans which had once belonged to the *Gaetulian* and *Maca*

22. *Praefecti gentium* of the Late Empire: Leveau 1973, 182-186; Lepelley 1974.

The Quinquegentanei: Galand 1970.

Praefecti gentium in the *Grande Kabylie*: Leveau 1973, 184-185 nrs.57-58 & 60; Martin 1977-1979, 78-83 (nrs 11 & 14) = AE 1985, 901 & 902;

--- at *Zucchabar*: *CIL* VIII 9613; cf. Gsell 1903A, 23 n.2; Leveau 1973, 173-174 nr.37 = 56; Matthews 1976, 161 & 185-186 n.85.

For geographical analysis of *Ammianus'* account of the revolt of *Firmus* (XXIX v) see Gsell 1903A and Matthews 1976; also 1971, 124-126; and 1989, 367-376. For the persistence of tribalism in *Caesariensis* in general see also Camps 1955 (the *Bavares* of western *Caesariensis* and the *Petite Kabylie*); Lepelley 1979, 49-57 & 136-139; Mattingly 1984, 171-174, 183, 192-193; 1987, 87-88.

23. Mattingly 1984, 47-48 is the most comprehensive study of the civic geography of *Tripolitania*.

Turris Tamalleni, beside the *Chott el Jérid*, was probably assigned to the Late Imperial province of *Byzacena*.

Mattingly locates *Augarmi/Augemmi* at *Ksar Koutine*, whereas I would favour *Henchir Kedama* (see below VII.2.1, n.12).

Mattingly (1988, 37) has estimated the extent of *Lepcis'* territory as 3000-4000 square km. *Oea* and *Sabratha* doubtless possessed similarly vast *territoria*. For full discussion see Di Vita-Evrard 1979, 87-91 & pl.1; Mattingly 1985B, 31-33; 1988, 27-29, 36-37 & fig.3; Jones 1989, 102-104 & fig.6,

Cf. Di Vita-Evrard 1979, 77-83, for the discovery of two stone *limites*, near *Mesphe* (*Medina Doga*) in the *Gebel Tarhuna*, marking the boundary between the territories of *Lepcis* and *Oea*. See also Mattingly 1984, 546 fig.19 - map showing all the likely *Tripolitanian* civic *territoria*.



ARZVGI·
M·AVREL·
COMINIVS
CASSIAN
5 V·C·LÈÇ

Earliest mention of Arzuges (after Le Bohec 1989 C)

confederations. It is possible that the settlements which grew up around military posts and road-stations in the hinterland, for example Remada (*Tillibari*), and Ras el-Ain (*Talalati/Tabalati?*), acquired autonomous status of some sort. Alternatively they may actually have served as tribal centres. During the Late Empire all the communities in the Tripolitanian frontier zone seem to have gone under the broad title, *Arzuges*, the region itself being designated *Arzugitana*. The origin and meaning of this Libyan name is unclear but it may be an emblematic label which evolved during the Roman period, and served to unify all the segmentary kinship groups under imperial authority throughout the Tripolitanian frontier zone and perhaps beyond in southern Numidia. The fact that during the Principate these tribal communities all answered to the military government of the legate, may have helped to foster a sense of group identity, distinct from that of the coastal cities, which fell under the aegis of the *proconsul Africae*.²⁴

No *praefecti gentium* are explicitly attested in Tripolitania to flesh out the pre-desert with identifiable tribal segments. However, three epitaphs (*IRT* 886b, e & f) in the cemetery of Bir ed-Dreder feature the Latino-Punic titles *b[al] msarasthie vy mysrthim* or *dni m[sat]yrth [vy m]yso[rthi]m*, which Elmayer (1983, 88-89; 1984A, 95-98) has translated as 'chief/lord of administration and justice'. The titles suggest some kind of formally constituted authority over a community and may in fact represent Latino-Punic forms of '*praefectus gentis*'. Alternatively, they may simply denote an internal tribal magistracy, for which the Latin designation would doubtless be *princeps gentis*. The community these 'lords' administered and judged can be determined with reasonable certainty. Buck, Burns and Mattingly (1983, 53) have shown the Dreder cemetery should be associated with *gsar*-dwellers of the Bir Scedua Basin immediately to the north. The Basin forms a discrete territorial unit marked by 'a distinct and homogenous group' of *gsur* 'defined by a common masonry type and shared

24. For a general overview of tribalism in Later Roman Tripolitania see Mattingly 1987, 83-91.

The pre-Roman tribal geography of Tripolitania has been restored by Mattingly 1984, 68-97 (also 535-536 figs. 8-9 - maps), in a sophisticated hierarchical scheme, based on the social anthropological concept of tiered segmentary societies. See also Brogan 1975.

The Macae apparently retained a distinct identity in Late Antiquity. The group figures in the Anastasianic military regulations from Pentapolis: *SEG* IX 356; cf. Rebuffat 1988, esp. p. 67; Mattingly 1984, 84-87. 'Gaetulian' seems to have degenerated little more than a vague ethnic or geographical label.

The *Arzuges*: Mattingly 1984, 96-97, who rejects the notion that it was the name of specific tribe. See also below VII.1.1 & VII.3.3, n. 37.

The title (presumably based on a Libyan root *RZC* or *RZG*) is first definitely attested in the 240's on a dedication by the legate M. Aurelius Comminus Cassianus (recently published by Le Bohec 1989C, 202-203). Interestingly, this is contemporary with the first appearance of the *praepositus limitis Tripolitanae*. The *limes* region supervised by this subordinate of the legate must be very similar to that loosely labelled *Arzugitana* in later sources.

The appearance of '*Arzosei*' on the Trajanic boundary marker at Bir Soltane (*CIL* VIII 22763a = *ILAF* 30) has been tentatively interpreted as an earlier reference to the *Arzuges* (Desanges 1962, 79), in which case it may have originated as the name of a specific tribe.

For the emblematic nature of the larger 'tribal' groupings of the Medieval Maghreb, the *Zenata*, *Sanhaja* and *Masmuda*, see Berque 1953, 261; also Fentress 1979, 47 & 1982, 331, who uses these as a parallel for the *Gaetuli*.

architectural features'. Each *gasr* was doubtless the focus for an agnatic clan or lineage jockeying for power and position within a higher kinship grouping, which embraced the entire Basin. The *Scedua* 'tribe' may serve as the model for the sort of social unit prevalent throughout the Tripolitanian hinterland, though much variation in the detailed arrangements should be anticipated.²⁵

IV.2.3 *Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis*

The southern, pre-Saharan districts of *Sitifensis*, *Numidia* and *Byzacena* were more thoroughly urbanised than the other North African frontier regions. As noted in the previous section the evolution of tribal communities into *civitates* had gained greater momentum here. The districts were extremely arid, like the *limes Tripolitanus*, but contained numerous large oases, which could sustain urban life and institutions.²⁶

One tribe is still recorded in the third century, the *respublica gentis Suburburum* (located on the High Plains south-west of Constantine). It erected milestones along the routes through its territory and set up communal dedications to deities. In many respects this *gens* seems indistinguishable from a *civitas*. It is uncertain whether the *Suburbures* retained any specific military obligations during the Later Empire.²⁷

In contrast, the anonymous *gentiles* referred to by *CTh* VII xv 1, in connection with the *curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati*, may well have been located in this frontier zone, since the principal linear barriers were situated here. The likelihood that small, hitherto unrecorded tribal communities survived even in this zone throughout the Roman period, is exemplified by the epitaph of one *Gerrasusu, vet(e)ranus, ex pr(a)efecto g[entis]*. The inscription was found at the site of *Sfaia Chak el-Doud*, 24 km north west of *Badias* on a bend of the *Oued Guechtane*, near the point where the wadi emerges from the *Aures Massif*. The text is undated but *Leveau* (1973, 185) is surely correct in assigning it a late imperial date. *Gerrasusu* is neither an equestrian military officer, nor a career administrator; instead, he appears to be a local notable, probably a member of the tribe in question, as was typically the case with late *praefecti*.²⁸

25. The *Bir Scedua* Basin: Buck, Burns & Mattingly 1983, 42-54.

For the *Bir ed-Dreder* cemetery see esp. pp.46 & 49-51; for interpretation of the inscriptions see also *Elmayer* 1985, 79 & 81; together these largely supersede *Goodchild* 1976, 59-71. See also VIII.1.1 and Appendix H.

For the *gsur* see Buck, Burns & Mattingly 1983, 43-45 & 52-54.

26. Rainfall across the pre-Saharan zone ranges from 100-400 mm per annum on average: *Despois* 1964, 17 & map A facing p.622.

27. For the later history of this tribe see *Lancel* 1955, 297; *Février* 1968A, 59-60.

Three early 3rd century milestones: *AE* 1942-1943, 68 (AD 215); *CIL* VIII 10335 (AD 216); *Cagnat* 1903, 101, *Gsell BCTH* 1917, 342-343, AAA 16,468 (*Severus Alexander*).

28. *Gerrasusu's* epitaph: *Morizot* 1948, 137-138 = *AE* 1951, 226; cf. *Leveau* 1973, 185 nr.59.

The gens for which Gerrasusu was responsible was probably only a relatively small community, perhaps merely the inhabitants of Sfaia Chak el-Doud and one or two neighbouring settlements. It had doubtless once formed part of the mighty Gaetulian confederation. Gerrasusu was clearly an important man within his community, military service had doubtless invested him with the status to achieve the post of tribal prefect and the wealth to afford a funerary stele complete with a Latin inscription. However, he was definitely not in the same league as the Romano-Moorish magnates of Caesariensis. It is likely that the community he supervised was similarly restricted in scale.²⁹

The scale and survival of tribal social organisation in southern Numidia is explained by local topography and climate. Human exploitation of the Aures-Nemenchas region is dominated by extreme aridity and the relief. The mountains enclose a series of narrow plains, which inevitably conditioned the political, as well as economic life of the region. Some were simply too impoverished and restricted to sustain the elaborate bureaucratic apparatus of municipal government. It is, therefore, likely that the mountainous core of southern Numidia contained other small communities, besides Gerrasusu's, which remained under the traditional authority of tribal chiefs and popular assemblies, supervised by *praefecti gentium*, who were theoretically imperial appointees. CTh VII xv 1 would imply Gerrasusu's prefecture was also paralleled in the Ziban oases, the Mountains of the Zab or the Hodna region, alongside at least one of the long *fossata*.³⁰

Other individuals endowed with Moorish names who figure in the epigraphy of Late Antique Numidia may well be from the same background as Gerrasusu. It has been suggested that the Caletamera, who was responsible for the reconstruction of the Caracallan *burgus speculatorius* at Kherbet el-Bordj, was perhaps a local chieftain, if he was not a military officer. The much debated figure, Masties, whom Février (1988, 141-147)

29. The ruins of Sfaia Chak el-Doud cover several hectares and include some well built structures, see Morizot 1948, 135.

30. For a neat summary of the way topography and water resources condition settlement and agriculture in the Nemenchas see Shaw 1984A, 134.

The Aurès-Nemenchas were not an undiluted bastion of tribalism. Other forms of socio-political organisation clearly existed there:-

Some montagnard communities may conceivably have been 'assigned' to cities in the surrounding foothills, such as Timgad.

Fentress (1979, 142) has suggested that during the Principate most of southern Numidia was directly administered by the legate as imperial property. In the Aurès a dedication to Marcus Aurelius (CIL VIII 2469 = 2239 = 17958), dated AD 166/167, was erected at Tfilzi (Menaar) by *coloni*, probably the inhabitants of that settlement organised as imperial tenants.

Great autonomous private domains are also attested archaeologically and epigraphically, especially in the eastern Aurès and Nemenchas: Morizot 1977-1979, 277; Shaw 1984A, 159; Birebent 1964, 144-149; cf. AE 1894, 84 = Gsell & Graillot 1893, 470 n.2, see also Fentress 1979, 186-187.

Whatever their original status the larger settlements were doubtless eventually promoted to *civitas*. For a pair of collegiate *magistri*, at Tfilzi in AD 197, and an undated *flamen* at the same location (all Roman citizens) cf. Morizot 1974-1975, 45-61 (AE 1976, 710) & 61-63 (AE 1976, 711) respectively.

now argues was a *praepositus limitis*, may likewise have sprung from tribal society.³¹

IV.2.4 *gentes pacati*

An additional argument for a strong tribal presence in the Hodna Basin, during the Late Empire, has recently been proposed. Two peoples, the *Abannae* and the *Caprarienses*, mentioned by Ammianus during the latter part of his account of Firmus' revolt, have been tentatively assigned to this area. Their localisation is uncertain for the topographical clues Ammianus gives are vague in the extreme, other than a general indication that their situation is well to the south of the other areas of engagement (the mountainous area of the northern and central Mauretanian Tell). These tribes have often been located in the Hodna region, the Mts of the Zab or the Saharan Atlas. Further, Decret (1985) has argued that it is these same groups that St Augustine refers to in a letter (*Ep.*199) of 420/421, when he mentions *gentes.... pacatae* who had been placed under *praefecti* and were undergoing conversion to Christianity. Decret (1985, 269) points out that wherever possible Augustine used examples familiar to himself and his audience. Augustine visited the rising general Boniface, at that time based at *Tubunae* in command of a unit of *foederati*, in 420 or 421 perhaps, therefore only shortly before the despatch of *Ep.*199 to his colleague Hesychius. Boniface and his *foederati* had been heavily engaged in operations to counter barbarian raids and it is certain that Augustine would have gained some knowledge of the region and its problems, indeed he was already aware of the valuable contribution Boniface's presence was making towards African security for he was making the journey precisely to convince Boniface to remain at his post rather than resign and take holy orders. Decret, however, regards the pacification that Augustine's *gentes* had undergone was that imposed by Theodosius the Elder, after the death of Firmus, rather than the work of Boniface himself. This point is very dubious. The bishop states that the pacification of the *rarissimi atque paucissimi barbarae gentes* had occurred only a few years previously. Nevertheless this caveat should not be allowed to obscure the essential logic of Decret's argument, namely that Augustine was most probably referring to groups of whom he had direct knowledge. Those tribes, whatever their names, would most probably have lain near *Tubunae*, in the Hodna Basin, the Hodna Mts to the north or the chains of the Zab to the south.³²

31. Caletamera: *CIL* VIII 2494; Pringle 1981, 78-79 and see below VIII.3.1 and Appendix E.

Masties was commemorated at Sanef, near Arris, in the heart of the Aurès. For full bibliography see below VIII.3.1 n.26; cf. Février 1988, 147, 'un homme des confins'.

32. For the location of the *Abannae* and *Caprarienses* see Matthews 1976, 158 & 179 (Hodna Mts or Sahara fringes & Aurès limits); Desanges 1962, 43 & 49; Courtois 1955, 119-120 (Hodna Mts); Gsell 1903A, 39-40 (eastern? Saharan Atlas).

But cf. Février 1986A, 803, who identifies the *Caprarienses* with a bishopric listed in *Caesariensis* by the Notitia of 484 - *Primus Caprensis*, Not. prov. Maur Caes 53. In this case the *Caprarienses* would lie further west.

The importance of this identification is considerable for it confirms that Moorish tribes were to be found settled in a part of the frontier zone ('*Romanis finibus adhaerent*') where there were stretches of *fossatum* - the Hodna and *Tubunae-Mesarfelta* barriers. These tribes were presumably installed either just within or just beyond the frontier, exactly as *CTh VII xv 1* envisages, and in close proximity to the running barrier whose upkeep was one of the specific charges to imposed on *gentiles*. No more than a dozen years separates these two crucial documents and it is even conceivable that the situations described therein were specifically linked, that the pacification of tribes close to the frontier may have resulted from the imperial exhortation to find *gentiles* who could perform the tasks of frontier care and maintenance demanded under the terms of *CTh VII xv 1*. The 'pacification' might be envisaged as little more than a recruitment drive, an offer of tracts of land in the frontier districts, in return for submission to imperial authority, rather than the result of outright military campaigning. This last point is very speculative. Warfare certainly was taking place in the *limes* during the second decade of the fifth century, requiring sterling work by Boniface and his band of federates, and this alone may be sufficient to explain the submission of a very few *barbarae gentes*. Nevertheless *CTh VII xv 1* explains why Roman commanders, having achieved the submission of their opponents as described in *Ep. 199*, might then wish to submit them to the tighter authority of *praefecti gentium*.

IV.2.5 Tribe and City

The above survey serves to emphasise just how intermingled municipal settlements and tribal communities had become by the time of the Late Empire. Ammianus' depiction of late fourth century Mauretania drives home this point. It was whilst campaigning against the *Musones* '*iuxta Addense municipium*' that Theodosius was nearly overwhelmed by the powerful alliance organised by Cyria. The *oppidum Lamfoctense* was situated near to, if not amidst, the territory of the *Tyndenses* and *Masinissenses*, probably in the valley of the Oued Soummam. Both the *municipium* [...] *jense* and the *civitas Contense* lay close enough to become embroiled in the conflict when the army was engaged against the *Abanni* and *Caprarienses*. Firmus even used the *civitas* - 'a concealed and lofty fortress' - to imprison the Roman soldiers he had captured. Most remarkable of all is the case of the *Mazices*. This 'warlike and hardy race' apparently lay close to the provincial capital of *Caesarea* and the ancient Augustan colonies in the Chélif Valley, such as *Zucchabar*.³³

This juxtaposition of tribe and city is generally regarded, following Courtois (1955, 118-126), as demonstrating the

³³ The *Musones* and the *municipium Addense*: AM XXIX, v, 28. The *Tyndenses*, *Masinissenses* and the *oppidum Lamfoctense*: AM XXIX, v, 13. The *municipium* [...] *jense* and the *Abanni* and *Caprarienses*: AM XXIX, v, 37. Firmus and the *civitas Contense*: XXIX, v, 39. The *Mazices*: AM XXIX, v, 17, 21, & 25. For their location in the mountainous hinterland south and west of *Caesarea*, perhaps stretching further west into the Dahra massif, see Leveau 1973, 171-175 & 1977, 298-303.

vulnerability of Roman rule and settlement in the African frontier regions. To pick up the last example again, the Augustan colonies of Caesariensis were the oldest Romanised settlements in the province; their juxtaposition alongside tribes such as the *Mazices* is indeed a testament to the stark limits of urbanisation, or more accurately municipalisation, in Mauretania Caesariensis. However, that vulnerability was doubled-edged. Tribal societies were at least as endangered by their proximity to the cities, which involved the risk of gradual absorption, the apparent fate of the *Musulamii* and *Cinithii*, or fragmentation, whereby larger settlements broke away from confederate tribes to form autonomous *civitates*. The latter, in particular, may account for much of the juxtaposition recorded by Ammianus.

It has been argued that tribal society was undergoing a resurgence during Late Antiquity and possessed more vigour than the cities. *CTH* VII xv 1, shows that this was not entirely the case. Citizens of *civitates* were still obtaining land in nearby tribal territory during the early fifth century, causing the problems the legislation was designed to counter. It was suggested above (III.1.5) that *gentiles* may have been allotted specific responsibility for the upkeep of a *fossatum* simply because they predominantly inhabited the surrounding area when the barrier was first constructed. Once the composition of the local landholding population had changed a corresponding reform of the regulations governing the *fossatum* was required. Even though private landholding was probably already established within the Moorish tribes the acquisition of parcels of land by outsiders would probably have had a disruptive effect, eroding communal tribal institutions. In certain areas, at least, the slow march of Roman municipal culture continued during the Later Empire.³⁴

IV.3 CONCLUSION: TRIBAL PERSISTENCE OR REVIVAL?

In section IV.1.2 the involvement of African tribesmen in Roman military service was traced right through from the Principate, thereby demonstrating that the '*gentiles*' of *CTH* VII xv 1 and Ammianus were not a new phenomenon associated with some Late Imperial tribal resurgence. The prominence assumed by Late Romano-Moorish tribal society in Ammianus' history, should not be allowed to obscure the issue. That account is the only detailed ancient description of conditions in Mauretania Caesariensis.

The explanation for this continued substantial tribal presence in the frontier provinces is straightforward. As the discussion of their distribution made clear, tribes survived in mountainous or arid regions where water and agricultural resources were generally not adequate to support urban communities. Even in North Africa, where *civitates* could be very small, a city required a more abundant resource base, to

34. Tribal resurgence: Mattingly 1983A; 1987, 83-91.

Land tenure within African tribes in Antiquity: Pentress 1979, 48-50; Whittaker 1978, 334; Gsell HAAN V, 205-208.

sustain its elaborate infrastructure, than did an equivalent tribal community. The point is perhaps most eloquently made by the arrangements in the Tripolitanian frontier zone.

As we have seen that region was largely the preserve of small tribal groups, loosely confederated into larger units. However, it is significant that the arid frontier zone was not entirely devoid of cities. The transformation of the *Nybgenii* tribe into the *municipium* of *Turris Tamalleni* (modern Telmine), noted above, provides the exception that proves the rule. What distinguishes the territory of the *Nybgenii* is the presence of fertile, abundantly watered oases, namely those of the Nefzaoua region immediately to the west of the Chott el Jêrid (including Telmine itself). These oases furnished the *Nybgenii* with the resources to sustain the shift to urban life and civic government. Thus the failure to municipalise the Tripolitanian frontier zone had little to do with its remoteness or the '*resistance permanente*' of tribal peoples. It was the scarcity of water and hence of cultivable land which severely restricted the potential for urban settlement in the Tripolitanian pre-desert. Where economic resources permitted a self-governing city did emerge.

As Mattingly (1984, 125) has underlined it is ironic but significant that the strongest opposition to Roman domination was offered by the tribes of the oases, the *Nybgenii* or the *Garamantes* in the Fezzan for example. They were the most populous and unified of the Tripolitanian tribes and for that reason initially posed the gravest threat to the Romans. However, once they had been thoroughly subjugated they were rapidly transformed into a peaceful *municipium* and a loyal client kingdom respectively. It was the widely scattered and loosely organised Gaetulian and *Macae* clans and sub-tribes of the pre-desert wadis and the Tunisian Jebel, which had initially posed Rome few problems, that were to prove unable to adopt the institutions of urban self-government.

In the mountains of *Caesariensis* some communities, doubtless the better-favoured ones, evolved into cities, breaking away from larger tribal groupings. The latter retained their hold over much of the montagnard population, however, resulting in the close intermingling of tribe and municipalities, which is such a striking feature of Ammianus' account. The relationship of this tribal survival to outbreak of revolts in the rugged interior of Mauretania during the third and fourth centuries is analysed in section VII.5.4. That members of the Late Romano-Moorish tribal nobility acquired almost unparalleled power, titles and position, when compared to their earlier counterparts, is undeniable. The most celebrated representatives are the house of Nubel. Whether such participation by the Moorish tribal aristocracy in the political and administrative affairs of their region should be interpreted as a negative feature, denoting an erosion of imperial authority, rather than a positive one, is more debatable.³⁵

35. The only individual from an African tribal background known to have acquired comparable or office during the Principate is *Lusius Quietus*.

CHAPTER V

THE FIELD ARMY

The second major component of the Later Roman forces in North Africa is the regional field army. The archaeological material discussed in Chapters VI and VII is of only marginal relevance to the study of these troops. Instead, we are totally reliant on the limited historical, documentary and epigraphic evidence. This imbalance does not of course reflect the relative importance of the two grades of troops. The term 'field army' is used throughout to signify the actual role played by the units discussed here, which lay outside the structure of the *limes* sector commands and were thus readily available for more than localised frontier policing. It does not imply these troops had the status of *comitatenses* at any particular date. The question as to when the African field units actually were promoted to *comitatensian* status is considered in section V.3.

Hoffmann's magisterial study of the entire Late Imperial field army to some extent compensates for the lacunose nature of the evidence by providing an overall synthesis of the field army's development during the fourth and early fifth centuries. It is important to bear in mind that many of Hoffmann's theories are based on relatively little solid data and have not always found general acceptance, but even so his work contains numerous valuable insights, which any study of the African *comitatenses* may benefit from. The chapter devoted to the army in Jones' *Later Roman Empire* nicely complements Hoffmann's work by covering general matters such as the organisation and supply of field army units. More recently, Tomlin (1987) has provided a general overview. There is little to add with regard to such matters except in instances where the African army may have deviated from the norm.¹

V.1 THE AFRICAN FIELD ARMY IN THE *NOTITIA DIGNITATUM*

The most important source for the field army is once again the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Three chapters of the document are relevant. The infantry regiments are detailed under the disposition of the *magister peditum praesentalis* (ND Occ. V), the cavalry under the *magister equitum praesentalis* (ND Occ. VI). Both types of unit can be found assembled in their respective regional armies in Occ. VII, the *distributio numerorum*. Together the chapters provide a regimental

1. Hoffmann 1969/1970. Hoffmann's central thesis is that the core of the field army regiments were divided into *seniores* and *iuniores* when the force was divided between Valentinian and Valens in 364. For critical appraisals see Demandt 1973; cf. also Drew-Bear 1977, 267-274, but note also that Tomlin (1972, esp. 259-261) independently reached the same conclusion as Hoffmann on the date of the division. Cf. also Hoffmann 1968, a paper devoted entirely to the military organisation and garrison of North Africa. For the Later Roman army in general see Jones LRE, 607-686 and Grosse 1920. Cagnat 1913, 728-739 is still useful for the regional field army.

catalogue of the African *comitatenses* in the early fifth century AD.

V.1.1 The African numeri

The units are set out below in the order in which they occur in the *distributio*, firstly the infantry then the cavalry. The corresponding entry numbers for chapters V and VI are tabulated alongside with any differences in the form of the regimental title.

Table V.1

Occ VII 140 - intra Africam cum viro spectibili comite Africae

141		<i>Celtae iuniores</i> = V 205 <i>aux.pal.</i>
142		<i>Armigeri propugnatores seniores</i> = V 151 <i>leg.pal.</i>
143		<i>Armigeri propugnatores iuniores</i> = V 156 <i>leg.pal.</i>
144		<i>Secundani Italiciani</i> = V 235 <i>leg.com.</i>
145		<i>Cimbriani</i> = V 155 <i>leg.pal.</i>
146		<i>Primani</i> = V 249 <i>leg.com.</i> (<i>prima Flavia Pacis</i>)
147		<i>Secundani</i> = V 250 <i>leg.com.</i> (<i>secunda Flavia Virtutis</i>)
148		<i>Tertiani</i> = V 251 <i>leg.com.</i> (<i>tertia Flavia Salutis</i>)
149		<i>Constantiniani</i> = V 253 <i>leg.com.</i> (<i>secunda Flavia Constantiniana</i>)
150		<i>Constantiaci</i> = V 252 <i>leg.com.</i> (<i>Flavia victrix Constantina</i> <i><id est Constantici></i> , cf. V 103 - <i>Constantici</i>)
151		<i>Tertio Augustani</i> = V 254 <i>leg.com.</i>
152		<i>Fortenses</i> = V 255 <i>leg.com.</i>

Table V.2

Occ VII 179 - intra Africam cum viro spectibili comite Africae

180		<i>equites stablesiani Italiciani</i> = VI 82 <i>vex.com.</i>
181		<i>equites scutarii seniores</i> = VI 63 <i>vex.com.</i> (<i>equites scutarii</i>)
182		<i>equites stablesiani seniores</i> = VI 64 <i>vex.com.</i> (<i>equites stablesiani Africani</i>)
183		<i>equites Marcomanni</i> = VI 65 <i>vex.com.</i>
184		<i>equites armigeri seniores</i> = VI 66 <i>vex.com.</i>
185		<i>equites [sagittarii] clibanarii</i> = VI 67 <i>vex.com.</i> (<i>equites sagittarii clibanarii</i>)
186		<i>equites Parthi sagittarii seniores</i> = VI 68 <i>vex.com.</i> (<i>equites sagittarii Parthi seniores</i>)
187		<i>equites cetrati seniores</i> = VI 74 <i>vex.com.</i>
188		<i>equites primo sagittarii</i> = VI 69 <i>vex.com.</i>
189		<i>equites secundo sagittarii</i> = VI 70 <i>vex.com.</i>
190		<i>equites tertio sagittarii</i> = VI 71 <i>vex.com.</i>
191		<i>equites quarto sagittarii</i> = VI 72 <i>vex.com.</i>
192		<i>equites Parthi sagittarii iuniores</i> = VI 73 <i>vex.com.</i> (<i>equites sagittarii Parthi iuniores</i>)
193		<i>equites cetrati iuniores</i> = VI 78 <i>vex.com.</i>
---		[<i>Comites iuniores</i>] - VI 75 <i>vex.com.</i>
194		<i>equites promoti iuniores</i> = VI 76 <i>vex.com.</i>

- 195 | *equites scutarii iuniores* <comitatenses> - VI omitted.
 --- | [[*equites*] *sagittarii iuniores*] - VI 77 vex.com.?
 196 | *equites Honoriani iuniores*
 = VI 79 vex.com. (*Honoriani iuniores*)
 197 | *equites scutarii iuniores, scolae secundae*
 = VI 81 vex.com. (*equites secundi scutarii iuniores*)
 198 | *equites armigeri iuniores*
 = VI 80 vex.com. (*armigeri iuniores*)

Detailed examination of the general layout of two schedules and the position of the African units in the *Distributio*, provokes several conclusions, which are relevant to the growth and development of the regional field army and to an understanding of the way the *Notitia* itself was used and emended. These observations are set out in full in Appendix D and will be noted where relevant in the next section. For example the lists suggest that a couple of cavalry units were transferred from Tingitana in the late fourth or early fifth centuries and that the four senior legions were moved to Africa at a relatively late date. More generally, it is important when studying the *Notitia* to recognise that it evolved as a manuscript document. It is easy to misinterpret simple conventions in the textual organisation or well-intentioned attempts by the *Notitia*'s copyists to 'tidy up' and 'correct' the document as something far more significant.

V.2 THE CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN FIELD ARMY

The army depicted in the *Notitia* did not appear fully formed as a result of some Diocletianic/Constantinian reform programme. Instead, it grew steadily throughout the fourth century, achieving its definitive form in the early fifth century. This gradual evolution will be charted here.

The origins of the force may be traced back to the warfare at the end of the third century which resulted in the arrival of an expeditionary corps under the command of the emperor Maximian. After the latter's campaigns (296-297) *legio III Augusta* was probably buttressed by one legion, the *Fortenses*, and at least two cavalry vexillations, the *equites scutarii* and *stabilesiani* (and perhaps others), all drawn from Maximian's army. The formation of these new high grade units should be seen in conjunction with the establishment of the *praepositi limitum*, which probably occurred at the same time. The troops of the *limites* were increasingly absorbed by territorial policing duties, and needed the support of a more flexible, balanced field corps.²

V.2.1 *Legio III Augusta*

There is good evidence that *legio III Augusta* was still stationed in Numidia at its longstanding base, *Lambaesis*, during the reign of Diocletian. Various building work,

2. The *praepositi* were certainly in existence by 301 and the institution was probably universal throughout the diocese's military zone by 303 at the latest.

accomplished with the aid of the legion, is attested by inscriptions of that period. The aqueduct supplying the fortress was repaired during the tenure of the *praeses* Aurelius Maximianus (289 or 290/293). The *via maxima Septimiana*, between the fortress and the city, was likewise refurbished by the legion at some point between 286-293. The Gallienic inscription on the tetrapylon forehall of the *principia* (labelled the *groma*) was recut to display the names of Diocletian and Maximian. The latest inscriptions attesting a legionary presence at *Lambaesis* are two of Tetrarchic date found in or near the fortress. They read '*Maximiano / invicto Aug(usti) / legio III Aug(usta) p(ia) f(idelis)*' (CIL VIII 2576) and '*Constantio / fortissimo / Caesari / legio III Aug(usta) / p(ia) f(idelis)*' (CIL VIII 2577) and were obviously once belonged to group of four bases supporting statues of the imperial junta of 293-305.³

The gap left by the cessation of military epigraphy at *Lambaesis* cannot be filled by archaeology since the upper levels of the fortress site were removed without proper recording in the '*grandes fouilles*' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whether or not *Lambaesis* was still the base of the legion its continued presence in the region is demonstrated by the appearance of the *tertioaugustani* in the *Notitia Dignitatum* itself. In the intervening century the only mention of the regiment is to be found in a law of 321 (CTh IV, xiii, 3) when the civil *comes Africae* Menander is instructed to ensure that the *tertii Augustani* along with the *urbani milites* and *stationarii* only levied internal customs tolls on merchants engaged in trade not farmers transporting items destined for their own use. This law probably refers to troops operating as policemen in the interior of the African diocese, perhaps *Proconsularis* alone. The *urbani milites* are obviously the men of the *cohors I urbana* based at Carthage, whilst the *stationarii* are soldiers (or officials) detached from other units. The *tertii Augustani* in this instance may represent legionaries belonging to a cohort stationed at Carthage alongside the proconsul, maintaining a practice of very long standing.⁴

The disappearance from view of *III Augusta* at *Lambaesis* is startling but need not imply the legion was moved elsewhere after the Tetrarchy. Despite its continued existence, attested by the evidence above, the legion is not mentioned on inscriptions from anywhere else. The vanishing act may simply

3. *Aquaeductum / leg III Aug ([Diocleti])/ani et ([Maximiani]) Augg / nn multorum incuri/a dilapsum et per lo/ngam annorum seri/em neglectum in melius refor/matum ad integri/tatem restitue/runt: CIL VIII 2572 = ILS 5786; cf. also CIL VIII 2660 where a military role in the restoration between 286-293 of the aquaeductus Titulensium supplying the city is implied by the supervisory involvement of a centurion, Iulius Aurelius. For road repairs near the fortress see CIL VIII 2718 (very fragmentary). The restoration of the gromam Te[rtiis] Augustani[s]: CIL VIII 2571 = 18057 = AE 1974, 723b.*

For *III Augusta* in the late third and fourth centuries see Cagnat 1913, 161-162; Le Bohec 1989A, 579; Hoffmann 1968, 240 and 1969, 192.

4. Cf. CIL VIII 2532 = 18042 = AE 1900, 34 for the annual rotation of a cohort to the proconsul's headquarters during Hadrian's era.

For the *cohors I Urbana* at Carthage during Late Antiquity see Cagnat 1913, 214-215, and now Duval, Lancel & Le Bohec 1984.

be due to the paucity of Late Imperial military epigraphy, itself perhaps a reflection of the reduction in the purchasing power of the soldiers' pay so vigorously lamented in Diocletian's Edict of Prices.

V.2.2 The New Diocletianic Units - I: the Fortenses

Maximian's expeditionary force

The warfare at the end of the third century resulted in the arrival of a considerable force under the command of the Augustus, Maximian. A number of the units which comprised his army can be identified more or less securely from inscriptions, mostly soldiers' epitaphs, which were either discovered in Africa itself or which specifically refer to service in the region.⁵

The army was quartered at *Sitifis* for a time. *Cohortes X et VII* of *legio II Herculia*, which together erected a dedication to Mithras, the first and second cohorts of *legio II Italica* and the eighth cohort of *II Italica* are all attested there.⁶

Other units assigned to Maximian's expeditionary force reasonably securely, on the basis of military epitaphs, include *legio XI Claudia*, the third praetorian cohort, and the *numerus Martensium*. In addition, the illuminating memorial set up by a Christian soldier, Aurelius Gaius, near *Cotiaeum* implies that either *I Italica*, *VIII Augusta* or *I Iovia* must have served in Mauretania at some stage during Diocletian's reign. More speculative, perhaps, are the Moesian troops, one of whom was buried at *Lambaesis* by his brother Aurelius Ursinus. A date earlier in the third century might fit these Moesians equally well.⁷

5. For a summary of Maximian's African campaigns see Seston 1946, 115-128. A brief assessment of the forces which participated in the campaigns can be found on p.119. See also Cagnat 1913, 66-70, Salama 1954, 225-226 and 1959, 347-350, and Benabou 1976, 236-237.

6. The cohorts at *Sitifis*: AE 1972, 710 (epitaph of a *sig(nifer) leg(ionis) III Ital(icae) coh(ortis) I et II*); AE 1972, 709 (*legio III Italica*); cf. Février 1970, 319-321 & 332-333 (nrs.1 & 14); CIL VIII 8440 = ILS 4195 '*Deo invicto Mytre, leg(ionis) II Herculiae fec(erunt) / c(oh)or(te)s X et VII, votum solverunt / l(ibentes) a(nimo)*'. For discussion of these vexillations see Speidel 1982, = 1984 65-75 & 406, where his initial proposal that the detachments from the two *legiones Italicae* were of early-mid 3rd century date is revised in favour of a Tetrarchic one.

There is widespread agreement that the legions entitled *Iovia* or *Herculia* were Diocletianic creations. This accords with the imperial propaganda of the reign, whereby Diocletian was the personification of Love, the all-seeing supreme commander, whilst Maximian represented his indomitable heroic troubleshooter, Hercules; see for example Jones *LRE*, 38 & 53.

7. D.m.s. Aurelius Dizo *milex leg(ionis) XI Claud(iae).....obitus in Mauretania*: CIL V 893 (*Aquileia*). D.m.s. Aurelius Vincentius *miles cohortis tertiae praetoriae, centuria Maximini*: CIL VIII 21021 = ILS 2038 (*Caesarea*).

D.m.s. Valerius Vit(alis) *mil(es) ex n(umero) Martens(ium) de Gall(icano) ess(ercitu)*: CIL VIII 16551 = ILS 3123 (*Theveste*), revised by Hoffmann 1970, 64 n.461. The participation of the *numerus Martensium* is argued strongly by both Hoffmann (1969, 175-176 & 1970, 64, n.(VI) 461) and Brennan (1972, 273). Aurelius Gaius' memorial stele: AE 1981, 777 (*Ada Koy*), cf. Drew-Bear 1981, 121-122, 133-135, who argues Gaius was still enrolled in his first legion, *I Italica*, when he served in Mauretania (under Aurelius Litua not Maximian, according to Drew-Bear). However Drew-Bear's reasoning is inconclusive and it seems best to leave the matter open.

There is no overt sign that this large expeditionary force had any long term impact on the North African garrison. None of these legions feature amongst the African field army units listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Nor do they figure in any inscriptions of likely post-Tetrarchic date. Nevertheless this may be a misleading impression. Immediately below the *Tertio Augustani* in both field army lists and apparently paired with it is the *legio comitatensis* labelled the *Fortenses*. This would imply that its length of service in the African field army was similar to that of *III Augusta*. Hoffmann (1969, 192 & 234) argues these two units formed the nucleus of the African field army. Hoffmann (1969, 233-236), following Böcking (1839-1853, 190ff), suggests that these *Fortenses* were formed from a detachment of Egyptian *legio II Traiana Fortis*. I would argue it is more plausible that the *Fortenses* were mustered from several vexillations of the expeditionary force, and left in the region to supplement *III Augusta* after the emperor's departure.⁸

The creation of Diocletianic legions

Such use of expeditionary army vexillations to form new garrison legions was probably not restricted to Africa, during the Tetrarchy. It is noteworthy that expeditionary forces, composed of multiple legionary detachments, can be noted in other provinces shortly before the first appearance of new Diocletianic legions. The most notable example is Egypt, where perhaps 18 legionary vexillations (9000 men?) are implied by a papyrus of 295, from *Oxyrhynchus*. A few years later *legio III Diocletiana* makes its first appearance, featuring in the Beatty papyri of 299/300, from *Panopolis*.⁹

D.m.s. Aurelius Nigrinus miles Moes(iacus) provinciam <e>M(o)esi(ae) Superioris: CIL VIII 18290.

A soldier commemorated at Tangiers, who had belonged to a *numerus Germanicorum* and the local *ala I Hamiorum*, might also be in some way associated with Maximian's expedition, given the mention of service [in (sacro?) c]omitatu agens: CIL VIII 21814a = AE 1898, 74 = IAM II 34.

For the chronological value of names such as Valerius and Flavius commonly adopted or given to soldiers on enlistment during the reign of Diocletian and thereafter respectively see Keenan 1973/1974, & 1983.

8. As Hassall (1977, 8) has commented, there are just too many units with this title to accept unquestioningly the *Fortenses* = *II Traiana Fortis* equation. Even allowing for successive derivation, or the odd duplicated entry, three field army legions, two cavalry *cunei equitum*, a couple of new style infantry *auxilia*, a *numerus* and a unit of *milites* is a considerable brood for a single legion. Moreover, one would not normally expect legionary detachments to give rise to *cunei equitum* let alone *auxilia*. *Fortenses* regiments in the *Notitia*: ND Occ. V 225 = VII 130, V 255 = VII 152, XXVIII 13, XXXI 29, XXXIII 28, 49, Or. V 45, VII 51, XLII 13.

The *milites Fortenses* in Tripolitania doubtless represent troops detached from the main body of African *Fortenses*, under the command of the *comes Africae*, to reinforce the Tripolitanian frontier sector (see below section V.2.4 and Hoffmann 1969, 234). The *numerus Fortensium* in Britain was likewise perhaps abstracted from one of the field army legions.

9. For the Egyptian expeditionary force see P.Oxy 43R; cf. Van Berchem 1952, 60 & 105-107, Jones LRE, 52, 53 & esp. 54-55, Bowman 1978, 27, 31ff, and Barnes 1982, 62. Also included was the *ala II Hispanorum*, a Moesian unit which was also to remain in Egypt - ND Or. XXXI 43 - as well as some *protectores*, and the *Comites*, a crack cavalry unit.

For *III Diocletiana* see P.Beatty Panop 1-2, ND Or. VIII 37, XXVIII 18, & XXXI 31, 33, 38; cf. Duncan-Jones 1978, 547-548.

Similarly, an undated, but probably Diocletianic inscription, from Qasr el-Azraq in Jordan, reveals the presence of detachments from four lower Danubian legions and from *I Illyricorum* of Phoenice (perhaps 3000 men in all), operating together in Arabia. Again, it is tempting to suggest that this force 'combined with (the emperors') soldiers from *legio III Kyrenaica*', represents the initial form of *legio IV Martia*, which is later found garrisoning Arabia alongside *III Cyrenaica*.¹⁰

The use of the label *mil(ites) fortiss(imos) suos* - '(the emperors') bravest soldiers' - to describe the members of the five Azraq contingents is especially significant in this context. It demonstrates that *fortenses* is precisely the sort of semi-official nickname which may have been applied to the troops of expeditionary forces, such that brought to Africa by Maximian. During the fourth century such names, describing the soldiers' martial qualities, were to make their way into official usage as regimental titles throughout the field army.¹¹

Clearly, the *Fortenses* only incorporated a fraction of the expeditionary force, though the new corps' strength (1000 men?) is impossible to establish with certainty. Aurelius Gaius certainly returned to the region of his birth eventually. Similarly, Aurelius Dizo was commemorated by his comrades in arms (*cives et commanipuli*) at *Aquileia*, where his vexillation was probably stationed for a period. Speidel (1982, 858-860), discussing the three inscriptions from *Sitifis*, which mention *cohorts of II Herculia, II Italica and III Italica*, argues that those cohorts were not present in their entirety. Instead, 'centuria-like subunits' were detached from the relevant cohorts. If Speidel's argument is valid (his reasoning does not seem altogether conclusive) it is conceivable that the various legionary subunits were brigaded together, subsequently achieving permanent status as the *Fortenses*.

The *Fortenses* were probably stationed in North Africa from the beginning of the fourth century. The presence of both *III Augusta* and the *Fortenses* in the field army has a neat regional parallel, namely the existence of the *limes Augustensis* and *limes Fortensis* in Mauretania Caesariensis. This need not necessarily imply those *limites* were garrisoned by men from the two legions, but it does look like an attempt to achieve some sort of symmetry in the military nomenclature of the region. Their presence in the region until the very

10. After much revision the relevant portion of the inscription, first recorded by Stein in 1939, may now be read as *mil(ites) fortiss(imos) suos legg(ionum) XI Kl(audiae) et VII Kl(audiae) et I Ital(icae) et IIII Fl(aviae) et I Ill(yricorum), praetensione coligata militibus suis ex leg(ione) III Kyr(enaica)*; see Kennedy 1982, 179-183, Kennedy and MacAdam 1985, 100-104, and 1986, 232, Speidel 1987, 215-219. As regards the date, *I Illyricorum* cannot have been established at Palmyra before 273, and may even be a Diocletianic formation.

IV Martia: ND Or. XXXVII 22, *praefectus legionis quartae Martiae, Betthoro*. The legion's title indicates it can have been established no later than 324, when Constantine gained control of the region.

11. Cf. for example the *Petulantes*, the *Propugnatores*, *Vindices*, *Defensores* and *Victores* amongst the *auxilia palatina* and legions of the field army.

end of the Roman army in Africa is indicated not only by its inclusion in the *Notitia* but also by the possible mention of a *tr(ibunus) m(ilitum) For[t(ensium)]* at Aubuzza in Proconsularis on a list of martyrs probably belonging to the Vandal period.¹²

V.2.3 The New Diocletianic Units - II: The Cavalry Regiments

There is good reason to believe that many of the cavalry *vexillationes* listed in the African registers of the *Notitia* were also stationed in the region from the beginning of the fourth century onwards.¹³

Soldiers belonging to two of these regiments are commemorated by epitaphs from Sitifensis and Numidia. The men all have *nomina* characteristic of the Tetrarchy. Valerius Marcellinus *eques de subcura Valeri [p]rae[f(ecto)]* or *[p]rae[p(osito)] equitum sta[bl]esianorum*, Valerius Dalmatius *exarcus equitum stablesianorum*, Aurelius Veritus '*eques stablisanorum*' and the latter's '*exargus*' and fellow *contubernalis* Aurelius Vitalis doubtless belong to the unit entitled variously the *equites stablesiani seniores* (ND Occ. VII, 182) or the *equites stablesiani Africani* (ND Occ. VI, 64) in the *Notitia*. Similarly, the Valerius Vincentius, *biarcus de nu[m(ero)] <i>scutarior[um]*, commemorated at Timgad would have been a member of the *equites scutarii* (ND Occ. VI, 63) also labelled the *equites scutarii seniores* (ND Occ. VII, 181), the most senior cavalry unit in the African field army.¹⁴

Other regiments in the upper half of the *comes*' list can also be tentatively assigned to this period. The *equites Cetrati*, the *equites armigeri* (both split into *seniores* and *iuniores*) and the four horse-archer *vexillationes*, the *equites Primosagittarii*, *Secundosagittarii*, *Tertiosagittarii* and *Quartosagittarii* are promising candidates. Although the two units of *Cetrati* are unique to the African army, *Armigeri* and *Sagittarii* may be found amongst the cavalry of the Danubian and Eastern frontier ducates, as indeed may *Stablesiani* and *Scutarii*. It is noteworthy that the Eastern frontier ducates, like the African command generally each have four regiments of horse-archers, there labelled *equites sagittarii indigenae*. In those regions the military force outlined by the *Notitia* is generally considered to reflect the situation under the

12. For the *limes Fortensis* and *limes Augustensis* see ND Occ. XXX 15 & 19 and below section VI.1.2. The Aubuzza martyrs: CIL VIII 16396; cf. Courtois 1955, 385, nr.II, 152, and Hoffmann 1969, 235, who is suitably cautious about the restoration.

13. For a general discussion of late 3rd-early 4th century cavalry see Hoffmann 1969, 247-279; for Late Roman cavalry in Africa see 1969, esp. 198-199, also 250-253, 263-265, 272 & 278.

14. CIL VIII 8490 = ILS 2794, Sitifis: D(is) m(anibus) s(acrum) / Valerius Marcellinus / *eques de sub cura Valeri / [p]rae[f(ecto)] equitum sta[bl]e/sianorum*; Valerius / Valerianus memori/am fecit parentis / bene merenti.

AE 1916, 7-8, Sitifis: A long poetic dedication, beginning with the formula d(is) m(anibus) s(acrum) and ending with Val(erio) Dalmatio exarco equit[um] / *stablesianorum*, Bato suo parenti.

AE 1937, 35, Thamallula: D(is) m(anibus) s(acrum) / Aurelius Veri/tus *eques sta/blisanorum (!)*, / vixit annis xxii / meses ii; Aurelius / Vitalis *exargus / contubernali / memoriam fecit*.

AE 1946, 42: D(is) m(anibus) s(acrum) / Val(erius) Vincentius / *biarcus de nu[m(ero)] / iscutarior[um....]*.

Tetrarchy or the first half of the fourth century with only relatively minor tinkering thereafter. It is likely therefore that these units belong to the initial Diocletianic military framework for the African diocese. Indeed they may well represent the cavalry component of Maximian's expeditionary corps.¹⁵

Troop transfers from the East

Several other of the vexillations in the African registers - the *equites Parthi sagittarii*, *equites Marcomanni* and *equites sagittarii clibanarii* - have also been considered longstanding elements of the regional army.¹⁶

These three could well be Diocletianic or late third century creations, as has been argued, but there is tentative evidence to suggest their arrival in North Africa did not occur until considerably later. A *vexillatio Parthusagittariorum* was stationed at *Diospolis* in the Thebaid in the early fourth century, when Flavius Abinnaeus, later *praefectus* of the *ala V praelectorum*, was recruited into it. Hoffmann (1969, 264) was cautious about equating the Egyptian vexillation with the African *comitatenses* simply on the basis of the similarity of their names, but there is now further evidence to support the identification. Speidel has drawn attention to a papyrus demonstrating that a band of *equites Marcomanni* were also present in Egypt, at or near *Hermopolis*, where they took delivery of wine in October/November of 286. Neither the *equites Parthi sagittarii* nor the *equites Marcomanni* are recorded in Egypt by the *Notitia*. Indeed, no other units of Parthian horsearchers or Marcomannic cavalry are listed anywhere in the document, save in the African field army. The logical conclusion Speidel draws from this 'coincidence' is that both Egyptian vexillationes were transferred to Africa together at some stage in the fourth century. The *equites sagittarii clibanarii* may well have formed part of the same troop movement. Certainly *clibanarii* seem to be an eastern troop type, the *sagittarii clibanarii* being the only such formation recorded in the West.¹⁷

15. See Van Berchem 1952 and Jones *LRE*, 57-59, 99-100 & 1427, for the probable Diocletianic and Constantinian date of the military units present on the Eastern and Danubian frontiers respectively. For the eastern frontier ducates cf. *ND Or.* XXXII-XXXVII. For the possible origins of *stabesiani* and full list of such units see Speidel 1974 = 1984, 391-396; also Hoffmann 1969, 251-252 & 263. They can also be found in Raetia, Egypt and in Britain. See Jones *LRE*, 1446-1448, tables X-XII for a breakdown of all these early armies.

16. Hoffmann 1969, 198-199.

17. For the *equites Parthi sagittarii* see Hoffmann 1969, 199, 265, & 1970, 109-110; the *vexillatio Parthusagittariorum* is mentioned in the earliest letter of the Abinnaeus archive, the officer's petition to the emperor Constantius II: '*traditus in vexillatione Parthusagittariorum degentium Diospoli provincia[e] T[h]e[b]a[i]d[os] super[i]oris*' and see below. Brennan (1972, 350) went further than Hoffmann, firmly rejecting the identification, but on inadequate grounds.

The *equites Marcomanni*: Hoffmann 1969, 199; Speidel 1975, 223-224, citing *BGU* 2074, II, 5.

Eight other regiments of *clibanarii* are attested in the *Notitia*, all in the East - one a *schola* and the remainder palatine or comitatensian vexillations of the praesental and Eastern front army corps - but note the description of one of the arms factories at Autun in Gaul: *ND Occ.* IX 33, *Augustodunensis loricaia, balistaria et clibanaria*. For general discussions of *clibanarii* see Hoffmann 1969, 266-277, Bivar 1972, and Coulston 1986, 67.

The date of this transfer from Egypt or the East is uncertain. A *terminus post quem* is provided by the career of Abinnaeus, who must have left his regiment by spring of 338 at the latest. So the *Parthusagittarii* were still stationed in the Thebaid at the end of Constantine's reign.¹⁸

Civil war is the most likely event to have brought cavalry west from Egypt to Africa. Ammianus describes how trusted officials were sent to secure Africa by Constantius II in 361 and Valentinian in 365, when those emperors were faced by a usurper. On both occasions the legitimate emperors were so preoccupied by threats on the Eastern and Rhine frontiers respectively that their African precautions were the only ones they took.¹⁹

It is not recorded that any troops accompanied the officials and officers named in the two episodes above, but there are several other less well recorded conflicts between East and West. Two in particular deserve detailed consideration.²⁰

On papyrological evidence both Maspero (1912, 126) and Oost (1962, 28-30) argued that an expedition was prepared in Egypt for despatch to Africa in 388. Oost in particular argued convincingly that this was connected with Theodosius' struggle against Magnus Maximus, the expeditionary force being placed under the command of Gildo, with the aim of winning Africa for Theodosius, or perhaps of reinforcing that general there. The *Parthi sagittarii*, *Marcomanni* and *sagittarii clibanarii* may have arrived in North Africa as part of this force thereby forming a relatively late addition to the regional army, but their position in the *Notitia's* registers might imply an earlier date, clearly favoured by Hoffmann (1969, 198).²¹

The revolt of Magnentius in 350-353 provides perhaps the best candidate. Magnentius was recognised in Africa, his name appearing on milestones in Proconsularis, Numidia and Caesariensis. It is possible that Constantius mounted an expedition from Egypt to recover Africa before or whilst he himself marched west to engage the usurper's main forces in

18. For Abinnaeus' career see Bell et al., 1962, 6-11, 34-37, text 1.

19. AM XXI vii 2-5 (361): The notary Gaudentius is despatched to secure the loyalty of the commander, the *comes Africae* Cretio, and the provincial governors against Julian.

AM XXVI v 14 (365): Another notary, Neoterius, together with the *protector domesticus* Masauccio, son of Cretio, and a trusted bodyguard (*scholarius/scutarius*), Gaudentius were sent to prevent Africa falling into the hands of Procopius.

20. Tomlin 1972, 264, argues that Gaudentius the *scutarius* probably brought with him a small detachment from the *scola scutarii secunda*, - Valentinian's former regiment - which then formed a cadre around which the *equites scutarii iuniores*, *scolae secundae* was formed; but see Appendix D.2.

The situations confronting Constantius in 361 and Valentinian 365 were less serious than those Theodosius and Constantius himself had to deal with in 387/388 and 350/353 respectively. In 361 and 365 Africa was already included within the dominions of the legitimate emperor not the usurper. Valentinian and Constantius were doubtless confident of the basic loyalty of their senior officials there. The emperors simply needed to send instructions to seal the ports and above all demonstrate their resolve to hold the territory.

21. The Theodosian expedition: Oost and Maspero both cite Mitteis 1906, 198-199, papyrus nr.63. Maspero's argument is also noted by Speidel 1975, 224 n.81b.

Illyricum. Egypt was the ideal springboard not simply because of its relative proximity but more especially because the presence of the Alexandrian corn fleet must have made the task of transorting sizeable forces, with their horses, equipment and supplies, far easier than would otherwise have been the case.²²

Seniores and Iuniores

Several *vexillationes* of the African field army - those entitled *equites scutarii*, *armigeri*, *cetrati* and *Parthi sagittarii* - form pairs of similarly named units, distinguished only by the additional labels *seniores* or *iuniores*. This is usually taken to imply that each pair was initially a single regiment, which was only later divided into two, a *seniores* and a *iuniores*. The division itself may have been effected in two different ways. Each regiment could have been split into two roughly equal halves, as argued by Hoffmann, or alternatively cadres of perhaps 100-150 men might have been withdrawn from one regiment, which thereby became the *seniores*, to form a second, the *iuniores*. This latter method is favoured by Tomlin (1972, 264-265). Whichever course was adopted both resulting units would then in theory have been gradually built up, by conscription or voluntary recruitment, until they both reached the notional strength for that type of regiment.²³

This putative African division should not be confused with the dividing of the empire's principal palatine units, which Hoffmann and Tomlin argue took place in 364. For that matter there is no conclusive proof that the *seniores-iuniores* pairing of eight African *numeri* does actually imply the earlier splitting of four *vexillationes*. An alternative explanation is possible. Even if the separation into four pairs did occur there is no guarantee that they were all so treated at the same date. It may have been a complex and piecemeal process. It is conceivable that all or some of these *vexillationes* were established as separate regiments from the very start, the homonymous units being effectively differentiated by their individual bases. When the need arose each troop could be identified by the name of its station - the *equites cetrati Sitifenses*, or whatever. Only when the local *ripenses* were upgraded to *comitatenses* and no longer assigned permanent quarters would there have been a need to distinguish between homonymous *vexillationes*. Thereupon, the titles *seniores* and *iuniores* may have been allotted quite arbitrarily, as an alternative to *primi* and *secundi*.²⁴

22. Magnentius' recognition is demonstrated by *CIL* VIII 22184, 22193, 22197, 22284-22285, 22552 and 22558. Argument about Cretio and *CTH* VII i 4 of 350 (349 according to Seeck).

23. See Tomlin 1972, 261-265, for discussion of the changing significance of the titles *seniores* and *iuniores*.

For an explanation of why there are three *vexillationes* of *scutarii*, one *seniores* and two *iuniores* see Appendix D.2.

24. Identical names were common amongst the higher grade cavalry regiments of the frontier ducates, even within a single command, as the *Notitia* makes clear. The document also shows the practice of adding the name of its current or former base to a regiment's title was fairly widespread, particularly where units

Only one African inscription gives the full title of a *seniores/iuniores* regiment. The dedication, from *Rusguniae*, celebrates the building of a church to house a fragment of the Holy Cross, by one Flavius Nuvel, *ex praepositus eq(u)itum armicerorum [i]unior(um)*.

Gsell and Matthews argued that Flavius Nuvel could be equated with the powerful Moorish chieftain, Nubel, well known through Ammianus. Nubel was the father of Firmus and apparently of many other prominent members of the Romano-Moorish tribal aristocracy during the later fourth century. If Flavius Nuvel and Ammianus' Nubel are indeed one and the same man the formation of the *armigeri iuniores* must predate the late 360's/early 370's when Nubel died. The identification of Flavius Nuvel and Nubel is disputed by PLRE I and Duval, but on inadequate grounds.²⁵

The *equites quarto sagittarii* were certainly present in the region by 373, when they are recorded as having supported Firmus. Indeed, their support for the rebel suggests they - and by implication the other three, numbered, horse-archer vexillations - had been stationed in Mauretania for a considerable period, long enough to identify with the aspirations of the local elite. As foreigners, effectively, amidst a strange new culture, the soldiers of a recently arrived unit would surely have clung to the cause of legitimate central authority and avoided entanglement in the internecine tribal politics of the Moors. The regiment's subsequent severe punishment and apparent disbanding has cast doubt on the validity of the *Notitia*, but perhaps mistakenly so.²⁶

V.2.4 The New Legions

The analysis of the *Notitia* in Appendix D suggests that, in addition to the *Tertioaugustani* and the *Fortenses*, five other *legiones comitatenses* of the African field army were stationed in the region for a considerable period before the document was composed. The five comprise two distinct groups. *Flavia victrix Constantina* (or *Constantiana*) and *II Flavia*

had been transferred from their original post; cf. *ND Occ.* XL 23 & 31, *Or.* XXXV 22 & XXXVI 25-27 for example.

The only examples of frontier units incorporating the terminal elements *seniores* or *iuniores* in their titles are three vexillations of *equites stabilesiani* in Raetia, one *seniores* and two *iuniores*: *ND Occ.* XXXV 14-16. Perhaps another *seniores* has been lost. See also below V.3.1 for a similar argument regarding the *equites primo-quarto sagittarii*.

25. Nubel must have died by 372 for subsequent the quarrel between Firmus and Sarmac probably took some time to build up. Even if the dedication of the basilica was one of the last feats Nubel accomplished, he was already *ex praepositus* so his command probably predates 370. Cf. Gsell 1903A, 23-25; Matthews 1974, 104-105, 1976, 174-175, & 185, and 1989, 373; Duval 1983 (1985), *PLRE* I, 633-634 (Nubel) & 635-635 (Fl. Nuvel).

26. *AM* XXIX v 20: the *equites quartae sagittariorum cohortis*. Ammianus' use of *cohors* is not technical; it is simply a more 'classical' alternative to *numerus*, see Hoffmann 1969, 5.

Perhaps the punishment only affected part of the regiment, as was probably the case with the *Constantiani pedites*, see below.

Constantiniana, form an obvious pair, their titles clearly denoting creation by members of the Constantinian dynasty. A second group is represented by a trio with closely related names - *I Flavia Pacis*, *II Flavia Virtutis* and *III Flavia Salutis*. Like the first pair these three bear the dynastic epithet *Flavia*, a general indication of an origin during the reigns of Constantine, his father or sons.

The Constantinian Legions

Ammianus records a *pars Constantianorum peditum* as having defected to the cause of Firmus. This provides a clear *terminus ante quem* for the arrival of *Flavia victrix Constanti(a)na*. As in the case of the *equites quarto sagittarii*, the legion's support for Firmus suggests the *Constantiani* had been stationed in Mauretania for a considerable interval prior to the war. Indeed, Hoffmann (1969, 193 & 345) even argues the label *Constantiani pedites* may cover both legions. This is possible given the well-known Late Roman predilection for brigading two units together but is far from proven.²⁷

Ammianus' testimony is also valuable in that it indicates that the correct title of the legion recorded in *ND Occ. V* as *Flavia victrix Constantina* was in fact *Flavia victrix Constantiana*, as implied by the equivalent entry in *ND Occ. VII* (*Constantiaci*). In turn this nomenclature can be used to determine roughly when the pair were established. They commemorate members of the imperial family named Constantius and Constantine but not Constans (as would have been implied by the title *Constantina*). On this basis Hoffmann argued the two legions could have been formed under Constantine, in which case the titles would refer to Constantine himself and his father Constantius I. Alternatively, they might have been created during the sole reign of Constantius II (350-361), perhaps after the defeat of Magnentius, and named in honour of Constantius himself and his father, Constantine. Hoffmann considers the pair was constituted for the express purpose of garrisoning Africa rather than being transferred to the region from an earlier station, and were founder members of the African field army whose creation he also assigns to Constantine.²⁸

Jones (*LRE*, 1427) proposed an alternative theory. He considered it strange that Maximian did not found any legions bearing his name to garrison the region after his Mauretanian and Austurian wars. He therefore suggested that the Constantinian pair, the Flavian trio, and the Constantinian legion in Tingitana were Maximianic formations. These were

27. AM XXIX v 20-24, esp. 20: '*Constantianorum peditum partem*', and 22: '*eos qui inter Constantianos merebant*'.

28. Hoffmann 1969, 192-193, for the origin of the Constantinian legions.

In contrast the difference between the forms *Constantiaci* and *Constantiani* is not significant. The former simply displays Greek scribal influence, the second is a more correct Latin ending.

Hoffmann also considered that the *Constantiani* would have been numbered *prima*, as *I Flavia victrix Constantiana*, thereby directly corresponding to *II Flavia Constantiniana*. Again this is plausible but not necessarily assured.

perhaps renamed by Domitius Alexander and/or Maxentius, before being further renamed by Constantine to obliterate the memory of the usurper(s). Maximian's work may in fact be represented by the *Fortenses* as was asserted above (V.2.2) and by several cavalry vexillations but Jones' hypothesis is still intriguing. Alexander or Maxentius may themselves have founded legions which Constantine subsequently 'adopted'.

Of the later history of these units we know little. It is usually assumed that the *Constantiani* were dissolved by Theodosius but Ammianus' commentary seems to indicate that only part of the legion was involved in the mutiny, and hence suffered execution. This may explain its apparent continued existence in the *Notitia* rather better than the ghost regiment theory.

Hoffmann considers the *Constantiniani* were later transferred to Tingitana. The *distributio* contains two *numeri* of *Constantiniani* one in Africa and another in Tingitana, but *Occ. V* contains only the *secunda Flavia Constantiniana* lodged amongst the African *legiones comitatenses*. The conclusion drawn by Hoffmann was that there was only one legion, which was transferred at a late date from the African army to the Tingitanian one. Again, caution is advisable. As is noted in Appendix D.2, with regard to the *equites scutarii seniores*, regiments with the identical or very similar titles were especially likely to be omitted in the *Occ. V* or *VI*, where there were no geographical subdivisions, but much less so in *Occ. VII*. In fact it is inherently plausible that one or more legions were established in Tingitana during the Constantinian dynasty. Otherwise Tingitana would be the only fourth century frontier command without a legion included in its ducal/comitival army.²⁹

The *Legiones Flaviae*

The presence of the *legiones Flaviae Pacis, Virtutis* and *Salutis* in North Africa by 373, at the latest, is strongly implied by Ammianus. The historian records the *prima et secunda legiones* were stationed in *Caesarea* to secure it and repair the damage suffered by the metropolis at the hands of Firmus' allies. Hoffmann argues cogently that this cannot be the two Constantinian legions so must be *I Flavia Pacis* and *II Flavia Virtutis*.³⁰

29. In contrast Jones *LRE* 1427, 1436 (Table VII) & 1444 (Table IX) considers the Tingitanian *Constantiniani* were distinct from their African counterparts, and equates the former with the *Constantiaci* listed amongst the *pseudocomitatenses* of the *magister peditum praesentalis*' chapter (*ND Occ. V* 271).

Of the remaining infantry in the Tingitanian field army, the pair of *auxilia palatina*, the *Mauri tonantes seniores* and *iuniores*, are probably a very late addition. The *Septimani iuniores* are generally regarded as another duplicate, this time of a homonymous comitatensian legion in the Italian field army, or, less convincingly, a unit amongst the Gallic *pseudocomitatenses*. They might however conceivably represent a distinct regiment, perhaps drawn directly from *VII Gemina* in north-west Spain at a late date.

30. *AM XXIX* v 18 '*primam et secundam legionem*'; cf. Hoffmann 1969, 345-346.

A centurion of '*legionis secunde Flaviae Virtutis*' has also left a record of his presence at Thelepte, on his wife's epitaph, but the inscription is undated. *CIL VIII* 23181 = *ILS* 9206: *Maritus gratias sactitati tue. / Fortunula, uxor / Valentini centurionis / legionis / secunde Flaviae Virtu/tis, et vixit an(nos) XL, dulcissime uxori / fecit; quae habuit patre Laomedonte / et matre Olimpia in urbe Sarra.*

This trio of Flavian legions may actually have been transferred to Africa at this very time, incorporated in the expeditionary force of the *magister militum* Theodosius. Hoffmann suggested that they represent detachments, withdrawn for service in Constantine's field army, from three legions which Constantius I had established along the Armorican coast of Gaul. Hoffmann's case is complex and intimately bound up with his concept of the overall development of the field army in the second half of the fourth century. The three legions cannot have arrived before the Valentinianic era, he argues, because two units of *Pacenses*, which were stationed in Northern Britain and on the Rhine, were not detached from the comitatensian *I Flavia Pacis* until c. 369, as part of Valentinian's programme of reinforcing the Gallic and British frontiers with detachments or cadres from field army units.³¹

The theory is certainly plausible. Remnants of Gallic Flavian legions can still be traced in the *Notitia*, at the end of the fourth century. The *milites primae Flaviae*, garrisoned the coastal *tractus Armoricani*, at *Constantia* (Coutances), whilst the *milites secundae Flaviae*, were located at *Vangiones* (Worms) in the Mainz ducate. Moreover, Hoffmann is not the only scholar to have proposed that the *Pacenses* were derived from *legio I Flavia Pacis*. However, firm, explicit links between these pieces of evidence are still lacking. For example there is no conclusive proof that the two units of *milites Flaviae* represent the 'parents' of *I Flavia Pacis* and *II Flavia Virtutis*. There were many Late Roman *legiones Flaviae*.³²

Celtae iuniores

It has also been suggested that the lone African *auxilium palatinum*, the *Celtae iuniores*, formed part of Theodosius'

31. For the proposed origins of the Flavian legionary trio on the Atlantic coast of Gaul and their draft into Constantine's field army see Hoffmann 1969, 190-192; their arrival with Theodosius: Hoffmann 1969, 345-346.

For the Valentinianic programme of frontier reinforcement including the *Pacenses* etc Hoffmann 1969, 335-358, and cf. 1974A, 168-173, developing and redating arguments first enunciated by Van Berchem 1955. *ND Occ.* XL 29: *praefectus numeri Pacensium, Magis*; *ND Occ.* XLI 15: *praefectus militum Pacensium, Saletione*. There is no significant difference between the *numeri* and the *milites* featured by the British and Mainz commands respectively. They simply represent different shorthand versions of *numerus militum*, adopted by the two ducal officia.

32. For the Gallic *I Flavia* see *ND Occ.* XXXVII 20: *praefectus militum prima[e] Flavia[e], Constantia*; cf. also two units of *pseudocomitatenses* in the Gallic field army: V 114 (*Constantia*) = 264 (*prima Flavia Gallicana Constantia*) = VII 90 (*prima Flavia Gallicana*) and V 119 (*Metis*) = 269 (*prima Flavia Metis*) = VII 95 (*prima Flavia*). The epithets *Constantia* and doubtless *Metis* (= [Ven]etis or [Nann]etis) clearly refer to the former stations of the upgraded limitaneian units. For *II Flavia*, *ND Occ.* XLI 20: *praefectus militum secundae Flaviae, Vangiones*. It was perhaps transferred to the *tractus Moguntiacensis* by Valentinian in 369. The fate of the main body of *III Flavia Salutis* is unknown. It may have been destroyed in the warfare of the 350's and 360's.

Both Van Berchem 1955, 139 and (more tentatively) Jones *LRE* 1444, consider the *milites Pacenses* and the *numerus Pacensium* to be detachments from *I Flavia Pacis*. Their names would be appropriate to detachments withdrawn from the comitatensian *I Flavia Pacis*, rather than the parent frontier legion, *prima Flavia*, less formal names being characteristic of field army units and their offshoots.

army. This theory, another of Hoffmann's ingenious schemes (1969, 432-435), relies on a passage of Zosimus (IV 16), relating that Valentinian transferred troops from Pannonia and Moesia Superior to meet the threat of Firmus. Hoffmann suggests the unit was perhaps incorporated into the forces of the *magister*, Theodosius, during the latter's campaign against the Sarmatians in the second half of 372 and beginning of 373, later moving with him, via Gaul, to Africa.

Again, Hoffmann's argument is highly involved and in this case not altogether convincing. He himself is sceptical of the accuracy of much of Zosimus' account of these events. One cannot exclude the possibility that the *Celtae iuniores* were transferred at a later date.³³

V.2.5 The Tripolitanian milites

One final piece of evidence may relate to the work of Theodosius the Elder. The *Notitia* lists two units, the *milites Fortenses* and *milites munifices*, in the Tripolitanian ducate. They represent the only higher grade *limitanei* (*ripenses*) in the African diocese, and indeed the only distinct regiments of *limitanei* recorded in the diocese by the *Notitia*. They may have been stationed in Tripolitania in the aftermath of the Austurian invasions by the *magister militum* or the new *comes Africae*. Indeed, a dedication honouring the *comes diocesis Africae* Victorianus - known to have held office at some point between 375/378 - has been discovered at *Lepcis Magna*. Victorianus may even have been Romanus' immediate successor. The process might be similar to that taking place in Britain and along the Rhine but on a much smaller scale here. The *Fortenses* may represent a detachment from the legion established by Maximian, whilst the *milites munifices* were perhaps a new creation. The importance of these troops for the commander in charge of Tripolitania was that they lay outside the local structure of *limites*. They were presumably more flexible than the localised troops of the *limites*, not being tied down by local policing duties. This suggests the response to the Austurian raids of Valentinians reign was rather more vigorous than has previously been supposed.³⁴

V.2.6 The Field Army in the fifth century

It was during Honorius' reign (395-423) that the African army finally achieved the form presented to us in the *Notitia*. These turbulent years provided ample scope for change and reinforcement. Africa witnessed two revolts by its senior generals. That of the *magister militum* Gildo, in 397-398, was suppressed by an expedition entrusted to the rebel's own

33. There is little doubt that the *Celtae iuniores* were once stationed in Illyricum; their partner *Petulantes iuniores* are still incorporated in the field army of Eastern Illyricum c. 396; cf. *ND Or.* IX 26.

34. *Milites Fortenses in castris Leptitanis* and *milites munifices in castris Madensibus*: *ND Occ.* XXXI 29-30.

Flavius Victorianus *comes dio(e)cesis Africae*: *IRT* 570 = Reynolds 1955, 131 and cf. *CIL VIII* 10937 = 20566 (El Bahira in the Hodna Mts.).

'brother', Mascezel. A further expedition, attempting to seize the diocese on behalf of Alaric and Attalus in 410, was defeated by Honorius' *comes Africae*, Heraclian. Three years later Heraclian himself revolted and invaded Italy, perhaps alarmed by the growing power of Constantius, the *magister utriusque militiae praesentalis*, but was defeated and killed.³⁵ That said, none of the seven units of Mascezel's army - the one force of which we have detailed knowledge - is to be found in the African sections of the *Notitia*.³⁶

Analysis of the *Notitia* does reveal a significant expansion of the African field army at the end of the fourth century or early in the fifth. The reinforcements apparently consisted of four legions, several cavalry vexillations and perhaps one *auxilia palatina*.

Hoffmann (1969, 434 & 1970, 179) has argued that two chronologically separate blocks of units arrived in the region during Honorius' reign. The cavalry, comprising the *Comites iuniores*, *equites promoti iuniores*, *equites Honoriani iuniores* and *equites stablesiani Italiciani*, he regarded as having been transferred to Africa in the first years of the reign whilst the three palatine legions and the *secundani Italiciani* joined the African army somewhat later, towards its end.

The evidence for the late arrival of these units may be summarised as follows. The *equites Honoriani iuniores* self-evidently cannot have been established earlier than 384 and in all probability post-date Honorius' accession to the Western throne in 395.³⁷ One of the vexillations, the *equites promoti iuniores*, is apparently recorded elsewhere in the *Notitia*, amongst the *vexillationes comitatenses* of one of praesental armies of the Eastern Empire (*ND Or.* V 39). Hoffmann (1969, 17-18, 27 & 427) further plausibly suggests that the corresponding entry in the other Eastern praesental army, the *equites scutarii* (*ND Or.* VI 39), is in fact a gloss replacing the *Comites iuniores*, which had been lost from the text perhaps through accidental damage to the manuscript. Since the Eastern lists are earlier (392/394) than the Western field army chapters this should imply that the pair was transferred from the East to the West in the intervening period. The most

35. For Heraclian see Oost 1966; O'Flynn 1983, 70.

36. The small size of Mascezel's force is especially noteworthy, as is the fact it was composed entirely of infantry. It would have been far outnumbered by the troops and tribal levies theoretically at the disposal of the African commander. Infantry were easier to transport by sea than cavalry, which required specially modified ships for their horses, but this still does not explain why such a force would have been thought capable of vanquishing Gildo's host, which included formidable Moorish horsemen. It may reflect confidence on the part of Mascezel that he could overcome his 'brother' without serious campaigning, perhaps aware that the loyalty of the African army and Moorish tribesmen to Gildo was shaky and would collapse when confronted by troops of the legitimate emperor. If this were the case the disruption to the African field army was perhaps not very severe.

For the power of legitimacy in counteracting rebellion see Jones *LRE* 174, who notes when discussing the period 407-413 that 'as soon as Honorius' armies appeared on the scene (the usurpers were quickly subdued and their troops restored to their lawful sovereign's command'.

37. See Jones *LRE* 1418; but note that the *equites Honoriani iuniores* do not form part of a group of units named after other members of the Theodosian dynasty, notably Theodosius' other son, Arcadius, which would virtually rule out their creation prior to Theodosius' death in 395.

likely event to have brought these troops west is Theodosius' campaign of 394, against Arbogast and Eugenius. After the battle of Frigidus Theodosius remained in Italy until his death. The Eastern and Western praesental forces were thus effectively combined, a concentration of military strength which Stilicho inherited. Zosimus (V, 4) actually notes that Stilicho retained the best troops himself in 395, when he despatched the Eastern praesental forces back whence they had come.³⁸ The position of the *equites stablesiani Italiciani*, at the very beginning and end of the *Notitia's* African cavalry registers, suggests it was the latest addition to the region's mounted forces.

None of these units can have arrived in Africa before the overthrow of Gildo in 398 (it is very unlikely that Stilicho would have strengthened a potential rival by sending him field army reinforcements).

As for the infantry, the four legions - the *Armigeri propugnatores seniores* and *iuniores*, the *secundani Italiciani* and the *Cimbriani* - do seem to represent a different chronological strand within the African army registers of the *Notitia* (see Appendix D.1.2). This block of units may have derived from the regional army of Illyricum, as argued by Hoffmann (1969, 183 & 438). The sole *auxilium palatinum* stationed in Africa, the *Celtae iuniores*, was also probably stationed in Illyricum prior to its service in Africa, which may imply that the *auxilium* arrived together with these four legions, and not with the expeditionary army of the *magister militum* Theodosius in 373, as Hoffmann has argued.³⁹

There is little firm evidence to support Hoffmann's proposed two phase expansion. There are in fact several occasions when these troops could have arrived and it is difficult to see why the reinforcements should not have been mixed forces of horse and foot. For example, in 410 Alaric's puppet emperor Attalus despatched a general, Constans, to overthrow the *comes Africae*, Heraclian, who had remained loyal to Honorius. This may quite conceivably have resulted in the arrival in Africa of praesental troops and their absorption into the African army after Heraclian's victory.⁴⁰

In one specific instance Hoffmann's scheme can certainly be challenged. The position of the *equites stablesiani Italiciani*, at the very beginning and end of the *Notitia's* African cavalry registers, suggests it was the latest addition to the region's mounted forces. The implication is surely that it was transferred on a separate occasion from the other three Honorian cavalry units.⁴¹

38. See Hoffmann 1969, 27 & 37.

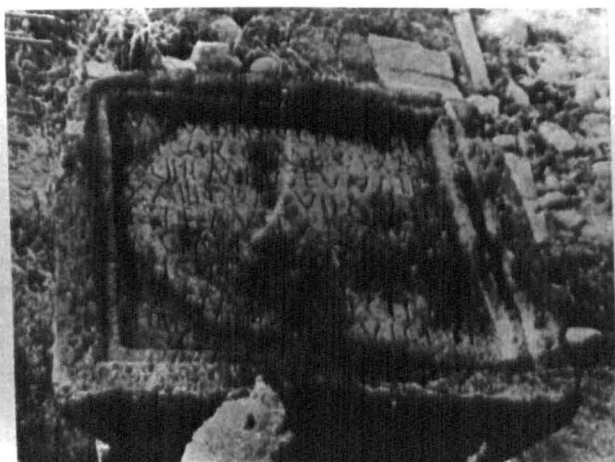
39. For the *armigeri propugnatores seniores* and *iuniores* see Hoffmann 1969, 183.

For the *Cimbriani* see Hoffmann 1969, 184.

For the *Celtae iuniores* see above V.2.3.

40. For Constans and Heraclian see Zosimus VI 7-9.

41. See Appendix D.1.3.



Reginianus' Epitaph

(after Benseddik 1981)

Some of the infantry regiments, the *Cimbriani* and the (*armigeri*) *propugnatores*, are mentioned on inscriptions from the region, but none of these provide much chronological assistance. A recently discovered epitaph from *Sitifis* commemorating a *cornicularius* (judicial clerk) of the *Cimbriani*, Flavius Reginianus, would fit better later rather than earlier in the period since military courts steadily grew in importance. The *mimoria (!) Fl(avio) Ursacio, ex numero Propunnantes (!), ex sculam Bracatorum*, at Timgad, is even less helpful, though the incorporation of same opening formula, *memoria*, suggests it belongs to roughly the same era as Reginianus' epitaph.⁴²

Whatever the precise details it is undeniable that the African army was significantly reinforced during the late fourth-early fifth century. One should also note that the African army was not only enlarged at the expense of the European forces but also by withdrawing troops from the small corps in Tingitana. Analysis of the *Notitia* indicates that the *equites scutarii iuniores* (*ND Occ.* VII 195), and perhaps also a unit of *equites sagittarii iuniores* (*ND Occ.* VI 77), were transferred from that neighbouring command.⁴³

The end of the Roman army in Africa

The last years of the Roman army in Africa are shrouded in uncertainty. By the end of Honorius' reign the *Notitia* had gone out of use depriving us of an invaluable source. The chronicles dealing with the period are pitifully sparse, all the more so in view of the momentous nature of the events that were unfolding.

As if to symbolise the decline in the *Notitia*'s usefulness, one of the African regiments - the *equites primo sagittarii* - is apparently recorded in the Eastern Empire by 425, where it is listed alongside two other regiments formerly stationed in the West, the *Cornuti iuniores* and *Leones iuniores*. All three are recorded on the Golden Gate inscription commemorating the successful overthrow of the usurper John, in 425, by the armies of Theodosius II.⁴⁴

42. Reginianus: AE 1984, 940, cf. Benseddik 1981 (1984). Ursacius: AE 1946, 43, cf. Leschi 1943-1945 = 1957, 234-235.

For the steady expansion of military jurisdiction at the expense of the civil courts see Jones *LRE*, 487-489. The *cornicularius* of a Later Roman regiment is as yet unparalleled elsewhere.

Numerus Propunnantium, is clearly a misspelling of *Propugnatores*. It could conceivably refer to one of another known pair of *legiones comitatenses*, the *Propugnatores seniores* or *iuniores*, but it is more likely that those commemorating Ursacius merely simplified the title of his regiment - the (*Armigeri*) *propugnatores* (*seniores* or *iuniores*).

43. In contrast, Hoffmann (1969, 193 & 198), apparently envisages a complicated system of transfers whereby European forces were shipped to Africa whilst African units were sent to Tingitana. He argued that two regiments, the *equites scutarii seniores* and the comitatensian legion, the *Constantiniani* (= *II Flavia Constantiniana*), were despatched from Africa to Tingitana.

For detailed discussion see Appendix D.2. Cf. also above section V.2.3 for the likelihood that the *Constantiniani* in Africa and Tingitana were separate but similarly named legions.

44. The Golden Gate inscription: *CIL* III 7405 = AE 1907, 62 = *ILS* 9216 & 9216a = *ILCV* 536. For this reinterpretation see Hoffmann 1969, 55-60.

The sources do reveal an increasing reliance on Gothic federates as the main battlefield troops of the African field army. Boniface was based at *Tubunae* as a tribune, *cum paucis foederatis*, c. 417, and later, when *comes*, questions Augustine regarding the nature of the Arian faith, surely of interest to him because of the Arian Goths in his army. Goths were also present in the force under the command of Sigisvult, sent by Galla Placida to overthrow Boniface. After the reconciliation between Boniface and Placida all or part of this force may have been incorporated into the African army. These federates were not large tribal groups, but rather men enlisted in Roman service either individually or in relatively small bands led by notable warriors. Some of these bands may have been nominally converted into Roman units, whilst other Goths were doubtless drafted into the regular *numeri* of the African army. Greater use may also have been made of federate Moorish tribesmen. It is however impossible to chart the effects of such developments on the regular units of the field army or the frontier troops.⁴⁵

Instead, we gain only occasional glimpses of the African forces in the second quarter of the fifth century. The last, but most revealing, of these is provided by the novel issued by Valentinian III, in 445, to regulate affairs in Mauretania Sitifensis and Numidia after they had been retroceded by the Vandals. Military affairs were now in the hands of a *dux* (no more is heard of the *comes Africae*), who probably had charge of all troops to the west of the Vandal kingdom, newly esconced in Carthage. Another *dux* may still have been clinging on in Tripolitania, to the east of the Vandals, but there is no firm evidence in this regard.⁴⁶

Some taxation figures are provided by the novel. Before the Vandal conquest Numidia had paid 9600 commuted, *annonae* rations and 1600 *capitus* (fodder) rations). This might indicate that the garrison of Numidia had earlier amounted to something less than 9600 men, including 1600 cavalry, allowing for the possibility that some of these rations were paid to the civil servants of the provincial *officium* and the fact that officers and nco's received multiple *annonae* and *capitus*. These figures were reduced by an eighth, as was the taxation due in Sitifensis, to compensate for the devastation caused by Vandal occupation. Presumably, the balance was, in theory, to be made up by neighbouring provinces or the central imperial coffers. The *dux* was apparently paid his salary 50 *capitus*,

45. Boniface, *tribunus cum paucis foederatis* at *Tubunae*: Ep. 220.7. Boniface, Augustine and the Arians: Ep. 185. Olypiodorus (frg. 42) states that Boniface had *foederati* at his disposal. Cf. Possidius V. Aug. XXVIII, 12, for Boniface's Goths defending Carthage.

The *paucis foederatis* of Ep. 220.7 were most probably Germans. Boniface had already distinguished himself defending Marseilles against the Visigoths (see Bury 1923, 245), so this subsequent African command must surely have been relatively prestigious, involving leadership of a field unit of federates despatched from Europe, rather than a band of frontier Moors. He may have combined this with command of the *Tubunae* frontier district, of course.

The label 'Goth' in our sources probably refers loosely to those originating from any of the east German tribes such as the Sciri and Taifali as well as Goths proper.

46. Val. III, Nov. XIII: 5, 7 & 14 (the *dux*); 1 & 5 (Numidian and Sitifensian tax remissions); 5 (the *dux*' salary); 13 (military operations etc.); 14 (private forces).

commuted to gold, from the revenue of *Sitifensis*, which may imply he normally resided in that province, presumably at *Sitifis* itself.

The law conveys a picture of continuing small-scale hostilities, mainly internecine cross-border raiding. The text mentions military operations, of 'soldiers established on a frontier' to 'resist opportunely the incursions of the barbarians'. They were to be denied leave unless their family and property lay far from their stations, in which case they were granted one month per year. Finally, we also hear of 'persons who at their own risk, because of their laudable animosity towards the enemy, have promised their own bands of men and their own forces for the common welfare'. To encourage such men they were to be allowed to keep whatever booty they captured from the Vandals. The *dux* was to ensure it was the enemy that they plundered and not the hapless provincials. One may speculate that these 'persons' were Moorish chieftains and magnates, with their forces of personal retainers (*armigeri*) and tribal kinsmen.

V.2.7 Conclusion

Although many of the details regarding the history of the African field army remain uncertain, one conclusion does emerge clearly. The force was steadily enlarged throughout the fourth and early fifth centuries. Beginning as a couple of legions - *III Augusta* and the *Fortenses* - and several cavalry vexillations, it eventually comprised over 30 regiments and perhaps more than 20,000 men, probably dispersed throughout the region. It is reasonable to assume that this growth had a commensurate effect in reducing the strength of the frontier garrison as the period wore on. The financial resources available to the imperial government, even allowing for increased taxation, were basically finite. Nevertheless, troops were still stationed in the frontier zone in the early fifth century, as *CTH VII xv 1* bears witness. Indeed such isolated, residual garrisons may have been less affected by the increasing use of federates than their counterparts amongst the regional *comitatenses*.⁴⁷

V.3 *RIPENSES* AND *COMITATENSES*

In the foregoing the aim has been to chart the growth of the African field army by determining the date its units were formed or arrived in the diocese. No judgement has been made as to when either individual regiments or the force as a whole were formally graded as *comitatenses*.

The term *comitatenses* itself is not explicitly encountered until the reign of Constantine, first appearing in a law of 325.⁴⁸ The establishment of this grade is associated with the

47. For comparison note the survival of *limitanei* in Noricum in the later 5th century, recorded by Eugippius: *Vita S. Severini* 4 & 20. Cf. Jones *LRE*, 612-613.

48. The first mention of *comitatenses*: *CTH VII*, xx, 4 (325); cf. Van Berchem 1952, 83-87 and Jones *LRE*, 97.

formation of a permanent imperial field army by Constantine, which has been outlined with admirable succinctness by Mann (1977, 12-13):

The origins of the permanent field armies of the 4th century probably lay in the long struggle of Constantine for power. During the long period from 306 to 324, Constantine apparently found it necessary to maintain a large force permanently with him, in preparation either to defend himself against his rivals or to attack them. The longer this force remained at his disposal, the more convenient and indeed essential he seems to have found it, and the more permanent it became.

A few of the most senior regiments in the field army have been traced back to Diocletian and Maximian, whilst the label *comitatenses* may feature on a couple of inscriptions pre-dating 325. One may be assigned to the years 311/313, the other is undated but probably belongs to the early fourth century. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt that it is Constantine who should be credited with the expansion of the few regiments in the Diocletianic *comitatus* into an integral fighting force, an institution in its own right under the command of *magistri militum*.⁴⁹

Thus when the *Fortenses* and the new cavalry *vexillationes* were first stationed in Africa alongside *III Augusta*, doubtless during the reign of Diocletian, there was no grade of *comitatenses* as such. The difference in status between these soldiers and those belonging to the old *alae*, *cohortes* and *numeri*, who now fell under the command of the newly established *praepositi limitum*, was similar to that which had always existed between legionaries and auxiliaries. Both categories were now composed of citizens of course, but this did not have the effect of homogenising conditions of service. Legionaries and the *equites in vexillationibus* continued to receive greater pay and privileges than the auxiliaries and retained superior status, as demonstrated by several laws. Indeed, the advent of the cavalry *vexillationes* may even have degraded the status of the *alae*, which henceforth no longer comprised the Empire's principal battleworthy cavalry.⁵⁰

The frontier legions and cavalry *vexillationes* were collectively labelled *ripenses* in the law of 325, which also contains the first explicit reference to *comitatenses*. Use of this term could only have evolved after or in association with the formation and definition of the *comitatenses*, to designate those legions, *vexillationes* and new style *auxilia* which

49. *CIL* III 5565 (= *ILS* 664) = 11771 from Prutting near Seebruck (*Bedaiaum*) in Noricum, names a vexillation, the *equites Dalmatae Aquesiani comit.*, in 311/313. Van Berchem 1952, 106-108 followed by Jones *LRE*, 55, argued that this should be restored *comit(es)* whereas Hoffmann 1969, 257-258, and 1970, 99, n.385, & 106 nn.530-538, puts forward a strong case for *comit(atenses)* accepted by Brennan 1972, 308. See also *CIL* III 405 = *ILS* 2792, from Thyatira in Asia Minor, the epitaph of one Valerius Iuventinus, *exarcus* in the *vexillatio equitum Dalmatarum comit. Ancialitana*.

The bibliography on the subject of the field army and who was responsible for its creation, Diocletian or Constantine, is immense. For a sample see Mommsen 1889 = 1910, 195-209; Grosse 1920, 54-63; Nischer 1923; Baynes 1925; Parker 1933; Van Berchem 1952, 75-118; Seston 1955; Jones *LRE*, 52-60 & 97-100; Hoffmann 1969, 130-308; Brennan 1972; Mann 1977.

50. For the higher pay and privileges of legionaries and *equites* see Van Berchem 1952, 75-83; Jones *LRE*, 55 & 1077, citing *CJ* VII, lxiv, 93 (293-305), *CJ* X, lv, 3 (286-293) and the *Brigetio* Table of 311 (*AE* 1937, 232 = *FIR* I, 93).

remained along the *ripa* as opposed to with the *comitatus*. Although the term (which later occurs in the form *riparienses* as well) is of course more appropriate to Rhine and Danube fronts, it is the only one available to denote higher calibre frontier troops and so is used here as a general title for that category. Thus the African '*ripenses*' would initially be no different from the fourteen units recorded in the first part of the *dux Britanniarum*'s list for example.⁵¹

V.3.1 The date of promotion

The question of the date the African '*ripenses*' were upgraded to *comitatenses* has provoked wildly varying answers, ranging from the 320's to Stilicho's era.

Much of the reasoning for these proposed dates has been misconceived. For example Hoffmann linked the troop promotion to the establishment of the *comes*' post, an event he placed in the 320's, following the common assumption that generals with title *comes* must in some way be associated with *comitatenses*. Mann has argued strongly that the first appearance of the *comes* does not necessarily signify the simultaneous institution of a force of *comitatenses*. The *comitiva* was initially a personal honour rather than the formal title of a specific administrative post. All sorts of officials, for example *praesides* or *duces*, might be accorded the rank, adding it to their functional title in the form *comes et praeses* or *comes et dux*. Gradually the more important ducal offices, which naturally were occupied by the most trusted and capable officers, would thereby be upgraded to *comitiva*.⁵²

On the other hand, Mann's view, that no regional *comites* had *comitatenses* under their command prior to a military reform under Stilicho, seems altogether too dogmatic. Yet another explanation would have the field army begin life as a small expeditionary force, brought to Africa at some stage during the fourth century. This tends initiate a hunt for a suitable 'event'.⁵³

Nevertheless, there is some evidence which enables the date of promotion to be narrowed. Firstly, Gildo, the powerful African commander during the late fourth century, was not a mere *comes Africae* but rather a *magister militum*, possessing the sonorous title of *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Africam*, as recorded in a law of 393. This is a good indication of the presence of *comitatenses* in the region, for

51. *Ripenses*: CTh VII xx 4 (325), CTh VII iv 14 (365), CTh VII xxii 8 (372), CTh VII xiii 7 (375) and CTh VII i 18 = CJ XII xxxv 14 (400); cf. also ND Or. XXXIX 28 & XL 29 (*legiones riparienses*).

See Mann 1977, 11 & 14, Jones LRE, 97-100 & 608, and Isaac 1988, 141-142. For lengthier discussion see Van Berchem 1952, 89-102 and Seston 1955.

For the British higher grade frontier forces see ND Occ. XL, 18-31.

It is interesting to note that the description, *limitanei*, does not appear until the 360's, see below n.56.

52. See Mann 1977, 13, and Jones LRE, 104-106 & 526, for the *comitiva* as a personal honour.

53. For example Gratian, the father of the future emperors Valentinian I and Valens, is a favourite candidate to be the commander (the first *comes Africae*?) who introduced the *comitatenses*. Measures to suppress the Donatists in the 320's/330's are the suggested catalyst. Cf. Jones LRE, 124-125 & 1089-1091.

it would be unparalleled for a *magister militum* to have had only *limitanei* at his disposal during the fourth century. Even if the title was only bestowed to honour and placate Gildo, and thereby ensure his loyalty to Theodosius, it is likely the command incorporated field army units as well as *limitanei*, though perhaps in fewer numbers than would normally have been entrusted to a *magister*. Oost (1962) has actually suggested that Gildo was entrusted by Theodosius with the task of recovering Africa from the usurper Magnus Maximus, his expedition being launched from Egypt in 387/388. If this is correct Gildo will have commanded field army troops from his initial appointment (and may also have held the rank of *magister militum* right from the start). Gildo's *magisterium* thus provides a firm *terminus ante quem* for the formation of the African *comitatenses* of 393, perhaps 387/388.⁵⁴

An even earlier *terminus ante quem*, of 373, is suggested by two details in Ammianus' description of the Mauretanian operations conducted by Theodosius the Elder. The historian records that Theodosius ordered the rebellious *equites quartae sagittariorum cohortis* to be 'all massed together into the lowest grade of military service'. This may refer to a demotion in the status of the troops from *comitatenses* to *limitanei*, showing the African legions and cavalry *vexillationes* had been promoted to the rank of *comitatenses* at some date prior to 373.⁵⁵

By itself the passage is ambiguous. To be sure, the distinction between the *comitatenses* and *limitanei* is the broadest and most fundamental occurring within the Later Roman army, but the fourth century army is noteworthy precisely for its proliferation of different grades of regiment. Thus Ammianus could equally have been implying the *equites sagittarii* comprised a *vexillatio ripariensis* and had their pay and privileges reduced to the level of a *laterculum minus* regiment, a cohort or *ala*. However, the fact that the horse-archers belonged to a numbered sequence of *vexillationes* helps to confirm the proposed *terminus ante quem*. Such numbered unit series were rare amongst *ripenses*, as examination of the ducal chapters in the *Notitia* demonstrates. Normally, the different regimental base would be quite sufficient to distinguish similarly named units one from another. On the other hand numbered series were very much commoner in the field army, especially amongst the cavalry. In addition to the four African horse-archer *vexillationes* there were numbered groups of *scholae (scutarii)*, *clibanarii*, *stabliesiani*, *scutarii* and *Dalmatae*, as well as several single examples. Numeration was a simple way of distinguishing such cavalry regiments with their simple functional titles. The logical

54. For Gildo's title cf. *CTH* IX vii 9, given on the 30th December 393.

See Oost 1962 for a survey of the conflicting evidence relating to the dates of Gildo's tenure of the African command, linked to a convincing explanation of the emperor Theodosius' apparently lenient treatment of his unreliable general. For a more conventional view cf. *PLRE* I, 395-396 (Gildo).

See above, section V.2.2, for three *vexillationes* which might tentatively be assigned to Gildo's expeditionary force.

55. See Ammianus XXIX, v, 20: *equites quartae sagittariorum cohortis, omnes contrusit ad infimum militiae gradum*.

conclusion is that African *equites sagittarii* were ranked as *comitatenses* by 373, and by implication so were the other legions and *vexillationes* stationed in the region.⁵⁶

As for a *terminus post quem*, the only solid one which can be established is the institution of the *comitiva Africae*. Mann's argument that the promotion of the *dux per Africam* to *comes Africae* post is not necessarily associated with the introduction of the African *comitatenses* is surely correct, but, conversely, it is unlikely that a regional field army would have been established under an officer of any lower seniority than a *comes*. Unfortunately, the date this occurred is itself uncertain. The *fasti* of the *comites Africae* and the preceding *duces per Africam* are very incomplete. The earliest *comes* known is Gratian, whose tenure can be established no more precisely than the 320's-330's.⁵⁷

V.3.2 Conclusion

Within the above timespan - (?) 320's-373 - several events might supply the occasion for the establishment of the African *comitatenses*. These can be divided into two categories, on the one hand reorganisations of the command, and on the other, the arrival of generals bringing *comitatenses* with them as reinforcements, which might in turn have prompted the promotion of the *ripenses* already stationed in the region. Two measures in the first category, in particular, stand out.

The creation of the *comes*' post, of course, represents one possible occasion when the African *comitatenses* might have been instituted. As noted above, the date of the earliest *comes Africae* is actually very uncertain, but some point in the 330's may be preferable. I would suggest that it is *a priori* unlikely that a regional army such as the African one would have received such status as early as the 320's, as Hoffmann argues. The term is first attested during this period and must surely have been reserved initially for those troops 'accompanying' the emperor Constantine and participating in his long struggle for supreme authority. Units which had served in that central field army but were later detached from the main body to serve in regions such as Gaul may well have retained their high status. There is nothing to suggest that any of the African regiments fall into this category, before the reign of Valentinian at any rate. On the contrary, their nomenclature is typical of frontier *vexillationes* and legions.

A second promising candidate is the introduction, during the 350's, of a command structure whereby the *comes Africae* was partnered in Tripolitania and Mauretania Caesariensis by

56. The comparison with the *ripenses* in the Eastern frontier ducates is especially compelling. The ducates usually have 4 troops of *equites sagittarii indigenae* each. It is rare that even one of them is numbered. See ND Or. XXXI-XXXVIII and also above V.2.2 (*Seniores* and *Iuniores*) n.24.

57. For Gratian: AM XXX vii 2-3, 'Gratianus..... comes praefuit rei castrensi per Africam'; cf. PLRE I 400 (Gratianus 1) and Pallu de Lessert 1892, 61-64. PLRE calculates his tenure to have been in the 320's or 330's; Pallu de Lessert favours c. 330-340.

comites et praesides, that is civil governors with the added dignity of *comes*. The addition of comitival rank probably marks the continued possession of military authority by those two governors, a rarity in the Empire during the Later Empire. It is possible, therefore, that this new system was designed to provide an administrative framework within which a newly established field army, under the control of the *comes Africae*, could operate. The general was required to support Tripolitania and Caesariensis in the event of a crisis, but otherwise was not to interfere with the two *praesides'* control over local policing and the frontier troops in their provinces. Conferring comitival dignity on the governors may have been intended to enable those two officials, by enhancing their rank, to resist usurpation of their legitimate role by the powerful *comes Africae*.⁵⁸

It is noteworthy that the first appearance of the term *limitanei* itself only occurs in 363. The role of *ripenses* as a mobile reserve for the frontiers was probably already being eclipsed by the regional *comitatenses*. Also, distinct troop classes emerge within the field army itself, at this time, namely the *palatini* (the troops of the central praesental forces) and *pseudocomitatenses* (promoted *limitanei*). Henceforth, the label, *comitatenses*, strictly speaking applied only to the soldiers in the regional field armies. Hoffmann argues that the new terminology marked the formal recognition of the growth of regional field armies and fossilised the distinction between praesental and regional forces. It would be unreasonable to suppose that North Africa was immune from these processes during the years prior to 364.⁵⁹

In any case, the question of the date these regiments were upgraded is perhaps more important for the overall study of the Later Roman army, and in particular for charting the steady growth of the *comitatenses*, than it is for the history of the army within the African diocese. Whatever their formal status, the better quality troops in regions isolated by sea, like Africa, would, in practice, have acted as a local field army. Indeed, *III Augusta* had always played such a role, even in the third century when a considerable proportion of its strength was outposted to forts in the frontier zone. It is all too easy to allow technical labels to obscure underlying realities.

V.4 RECRUITMENT

58. Tripolitania provides the best evidence for *comites et praesides*, with military authority in the 350's. Archontius Nilus and perhaps Flavius Nepotianus were militarily active then: cf. *CIL VIII* 22768 = Rebuffat 1980, 111-112, *CIL VIII* 22766 + 22767 = *ILAF* 11 & below Appendix K.3 (Nilus at Ras el-Ain); also *CIL VIII* 11031, *IRT* 562 & 563 (Nilus); *IRT* 565 (Nepotianus); and see below VI.1.4 n.26.

For comparable Mauretanian evidence: *CIL II* 2110 = *ILS* 6116 (an undated v.c. *comes et praeses p. M.C.*, Flavius Hyginus), *CIL VIII* 9282 (*nova moenia* built at Mouzaia, *cuncta comitum... iussa*) and see VII.5.4 n.88.

59. *Limitanei*: *CTH XII* i 56 (363), cf. also Festus Brev.XXV (written c.369).

The earliest mention of *palatini* and *pseudocomitatenses*: *CTH VIII* i 10 (365). See Jones *LRE*, 125-126, 608-609 & 1091-1092, Hoffmann 1969, 396-424, and Mann 1977, 13.

V.4.1 Introduction

It is commonly asserted that the fourth century army was largely composed of barbarians, in particular Germans. Much ink has been spilt on the reasons for the apparent decline in Roman willingness to enlist in the army. The explanations often seem couched in nineteenth century language, as it is argued the Romans (which Romans?) had declined in 'martial spirit'. The reasons for changes in recruitment patterns were no doubt complex, perhaps involving social and demographic shifts, or the prestigious reputation of the Rhine German troops after the stunning victories of Constantine. Here, however, one rather more prosaic reason will be cited, since it is relevant to the forces considered in this work.⁶⁰

It is likely that the new, highly mobile, praesental field armies of the fourth century needed a constant infusion of new recruits. Their regiments had no fixed stations and thus no access to the military fortress culture, which must have been so important in maintaining hereditary service in the army of the Principate, which had been stationed in permanent bases along the frontier. In the cities of the interior, the son of a praesental soldier might easily drift into another occupations, particularly if his father's unit moved elsewhere. The new blood required could only be obtained by two means, citizen conscription and the recruitment of foreign barbarian volunteers, the latter being, administratively, the less arduous course. In contrast, hereditary and voluntary service may have remained more common within the *limitanei* and the regional field armies. The relative stability of these forces would have facilitated hereditary service and made the life more attractive to local volunteers. The neighbouring communities were permeated by a more militarised, frontier culture. Thus, the bulk of citizen volunteers doubtless derived from the frontier provinces, where the army was a less alien presence and where its value was readily apparent.

It is likely, therefore, that the *limitanei* and regional *comitatenses* stationed in Africa would still have preserved a strong indigenous element, maintained by local volunteers and by conscription.

The contribution of Moorish troops during the troubled years of the later third century was vital. As light, javelin-armed, skirmishing cavalry they were the crucial tool in dealing with the horse archery of Rome's eastern opponents. This force was then apparently split up by Aurelian, or perhaps Diocletian, to form part of the new garrison of the Eastern frontier provinces. Under the label of the *equites Mauri Illyriciani* their descendants were to serve on that frontier for the next 350 years. Moorish units - both cavalry and infantry - still figure in the field army of the fourth and fifth centuries, though less prominently than their third century counterparts.⁶¹

60. Basis for this survey are Jones *LRE*, Mann 1983, 66-68 and Liebeschuetz, 1990.

61. See Speidel 1975, 212-221, for the prominent role of Moorish troops in 3rd century imperial campaigns.

V.4.2 The African Evidence

The names of all soldiers appearing on inscriptions in North Africa are tabulated below to indicate their likely origin. The names of soldiers recorded by inscriptions are not always an infallible guide to ethnic origin. Some barbarian soldiers took a Roman cognomen when they entered imperial service. Nevertheless, the texts do form a rough and doubtless usually reliable guide.⁶²

Table V.3

Name	Unit	Origin	Ref.
Aur.Valens	<i>II Italica</i>	Illyricum?	AE 1972,
		(Noricum?)	709
Aur.Marcianus	"	Roman	"
		(Noricum?)	
Aur.Vitalis	<i>III Italica</i>	Roman	AE 1972,
		(Raetia?)	710
Val.Iulius	"	"	"
Aur.Dizo	<i>XI Claudia</i>	Danubian	C. V 893
Aur.Vincentius	<i>Coh.III praetoria</i>	'civis	C.21021
		<i>T(h)rax'</i>	= <i>ILS</i> 2038
Maximinus	" " "	Roman	"
Val.Vitalis	<i>numerus Martensium</i>	Roman	C.16551
			= <i>ILAlg</i> I
			3123
Aur.Nigrinus	<i>Moesiaci?</i> or one the	Moesia	C.18290
Aur.Ursinus	Moesian legions	Superior	"
Val.Vincentius	<i>equites scutarii</i>	Roman	AE 1946,42
Val.	<i>equites stablesiani</i>	"	C.8490
Marcellinus			
Val.Dalmatius	<i>equites stablesiani</i>	Illyricum?	AE 1916,7-8

Moorish regiments in the Later Roman field army: *auxilia palatina* - ND Occ. V 203-204 = VII 51 & 26 (*Mauri Honoriani seniores & iuniores*), V 221-222 = VII 136-137 (*Mauri tonantes seniores & iuniores*); *legio comitatensis* - V 233 = VII 56 (*Mauri cetrati*); vexillationes comitatenses - VI 58 = VII 177 (*equites Mauri alites*), VI 61 = VII 164 (*equites Mauri feroces*).

One of the Moorish cavalry vexillations was instrumental in the overthrow of Gratian; cf. Zosimus IV 35. The Moorish character of some of these units may well have minimal by the time the *Notitia* was drawn up, but the infantry *auxilia palatina* were probably only raised at end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th centuries. Such is obviously the case with the *Mauri Honoriani* pair, doubtless raised in the aftermath of Gildo's revolt. The *Mauri Tonantes*, incorporated in the small regional field army of Mauretania Tingitana, were perhaps also late units.

Of course, there was no reason why North African recruits shouldn't have been drafted into any *numerus* of the field army.

62. A number of senior officers with Roman names are known to have been of barbarian origin. For example, Victor, *magister equitum* in praesenti under Valens (a Sarmatian), Silvanus, *magister peditum* in Gaul in the 350's (a Frank), and Silvanus' father, Bonitus, who served as a distinguished general under Constantine. Cf. Jones *LRE*, 142 & 622-623, Liebeschuetz 1990, 8, and AM XV v 15-16. *PLRE* I under the appropriate entries.

The most convenient collection of Late imperial military nomenclature is that furnished by the cemetery at Concordia, published by Hoffmann (1963, and summarised in 1969, 75-78 & cf. 81-83 for discussion). Hoffmann dates these epitaphs to 394/395 but Tomlin 1972, 256-257 & 269-272 is more cautious ('a longer accumulation of units active in northeastern Italy, from the 380's into the early fifth century').

Bato			"	"
Aur.Veritus	"	"	Roman	AE 1937,35
Aur.Vitalis	"	"	"	"
Valentinus	Leg.II Flavia Virtutis	Roman	C.23181	
Fl.Reginianus	Cimbriani	Roman	AE 1984,940	
Fl.Ursacius	Armigeri propugnatores? (Numerus propunnantes!)	Roman	AE 1946,43	
Aur.Nucfu (??)	eq Armigeri sen/iun (?) Armig. propug. sen/iun?	Moorish	C.9613	

The sample is heavily weighted towards the beginning of the period. Sixteen out of twenty of the names can be assigned to Maximian's expeditionary force or to the tetrarchic cavalry formations, the *scutarii* and *stabliesiani*, probably stationed by the emperor in the region in the aftermath of his campaigns. The soldiers belonging to such units were probably mostly of Illyrian or Thracian origin. None of the names recorded on the later inscriptions betrays any trace of Germanic origin but they are too few to constitute a representative selection. As a result it is necessary to resort to less systematic evidence.

Conscription was certainly implemented in North Africa. One of the few authentic hagiographical accounts preserves a precious description of the examination of a recruit at *Theveste* in 295, before the proconsul Dion and the *praepositus Caesariensis*, Valerius(?) (or Valesianus) Quintinianus. Another specific reference to Africa concerns tribunes engaged in rounding up vagrants and deserters in 412.⁶³

The *limitanei* were probably still maintained by local voluntary and hereditary recruitment, as sons followed their fathers in the service of their local *limes*. The *optio* Aurelius Massamarus, at *Numerus Syrorum*, noted in section II.1.1, is perhaps one such example. Speidel (1973, 176 n.61) suggested a Celtic source for this *cognomen*, but the prefix *Mas...*, signifying nobility or lordship, is a well-recognised feature of Mauro-Libyan nomenclature. The suffix *...marus* is also not without parallel in ancient Berber. Calemerus, a centurion of *III Augusta*, probably in the third century, and Caletamera, the figure responsible for twice restoring the *burgus speculatorius* at Kherbet el-Bordj, are examples of one variant.⁶⁴

Gerrasusu had certainly performed military service, perhaps rising through the ranks to hold an nco's post before discharge and his tenure of a tribal prefecture. The veteran Gerrasusu who later held the position of tribal prefect is one example, less certainly Aurelius Nucfu, the *armiger* at *Zucchabar*, might conceivably represent another, although the

63. This passage is translated by Jones *LRE*, 616-617; cf. Barnes 1982, 177 & 183, who notes the need for a new edition of this text.

CTh VII xviii 17: *omnes tribunos, qui per Africam vagorum et desertorum requirendorum sumpserunt officium*.

64. Massamarus: *CIL VIII* 9964, and above II.1.1. For Calemerus and Caletamera see below VIII.3.1 & 2 and Appendix K.4.

possibility that he was simply a chieftain's bodyguard has great merit.

The slow build-up of the field army throughout the fourth century will have entailed a steady, but limited, infusion of manpower foreign to the region. The table below summarises the conclusions of section V.2 regarding the likely origin and composition of these *numeri*.

Table V.4

<i>III Augusta</i>	African	pre 284
<i>Limitanei</i>	African-Moorish-Libyan	pre 284
<i>Fortenses</i>	Danubian-Gallic	297
<i>eq. scutarii</i>	Danubian	"
<i>eq. stablesiani (Afr.)</i>	Illyrian	"
<i>I Flav Constantiana</i>	African?	320's/350's
<i>II Flav Constantiniana</i>	African?	"
<i>eq. armigeri</i>	Afric./Danub/Oriental?	297-350's?
<i>eq. Marcomanni</i>	Egyptian	350's/387-8
<i>eq. sag. clibanarii</i>	Egyptian-Oriental?	"
<i>eq. Parthi sagittarii</i>	" "	"
<i>eq. cetrati</i>	African?-Moorish	300-360's
<i>eqq. I-IV sagittarii</i>	Eastern or African?	"
<i>I-III Flavia</i>	Gallic-German	373?
<i>Pacis-Vir-Salutis</i>		
<i>Celtae iuniores</i>	German-Roman (Illyric?)	373?/5th C?
<i>Comites iuniores</i>	German-Eastern Empire	Late 4-5th C
<i>eq. promoti iuniores</i>	"	"
<i>eq. scutarii iuniores</i>	Mauretania Tingitana	"
<i>eq. sagittarii iun?</i>	" "	"
<i>eq. Honoriani iuniores</i>	German-Roman?	"
<i>eq. stablesiani Italic.</i>	" "	5th C
<i>Cimbriani</i>	German-Roman (Illyric?)	"
<i>Armigeri propug sen/iun</i>	" " "	"
<i>secundani Italiciani</i>	" " "	"

Some of the cavalry regiments, the *Parthi sagittarii*, *sagittarii clibanarii* and paradoxically perhaps the *equites Marcomanni*, may have added an oriental and Egyptian element. If Hoffmann is correct in his argument, the three legions in the group headed by *I Flavia Pacis* arrived from Gaul in the 370's. They will have comprised a mixed complement of Gallo-Roman and Germans. The balance will have varied according to whether the legions had been serving amongst the Gallic coast *limitanei*, the Gallic regional field army or the praesental forces, in the period immediately beforehand. Unfortunately, the epitaph of Valentinus, centurion of *II Virtutis* gives away few clues. The Germanic element is likely to have been even stronger in the *auxilium palatinum*, the *Celtae iuniores*, whether with Theodosius or later on.⁶⁵

65. It is likely that before Adrianople Germans predominated the *auxilia palatina* whereas Roman citizens tended to be despatched into the legions, but Romans were not unknown in the *auxilia* and vice versa; cf. Liebeschuetz 1990, 14-15.

On the other hand, some comitatensian regiments may well have been formed in the region itself, with local recruits. The *equites cetrati* may well be one example. The *cetra* (a type of shield or buckler) was definitely associated with one Moorish unit, the *Mauri cetrati*, a *legio comitatensis* stationed in Illyricum (*ND Occ.* V 233 = VII 56). The *equites armigeri* might conceivably have been provided by local tribal magnates such as Flavius Nuvel, though this is a bit of a long shot. Hoffmann considers the two Constantinian legions were established for the very purpose of strengthening the African garrison.

More importantly, local recruitment will soon have begun to dilute the external manpower that had arrived. The conduct of the *equites quartosagittarii* and the *Constantiani pedites*, during Firmus' revolt, is a strong indication of the indigenous nature of the African field army, as noted in V.2.2. Furthermore, homegrown, barbarian Africans were like their German counterparts no doubt willing to serve in the regular army. The Moorish contribution to the central field army was not as marked in the fourth century as it had been in the third, when Moorish cavalry, and sometimes infantry, feature in virtually every battle. The African *comitatenses* and *limitanei* may have absorbed the balance.

There is no reason to assume that Germans formed a prominent component of the army until the early fifth century, when several units were transferred into the region from the European field armies, and when more especially the employment of German, especially Gothic, federates is noted in the African sources. It is only towards the end of the fourth century and more especially in the fifth, that a pronounced marked Germanic element is discernable in the African field army. Hoffmann's analysis of the *Notitia* indicates that several regiments were transferred to the region during this period from the central palatine forces or perhaps the Illyrian regional army. The four cavalry vexillations, the *equites promoti iuniores*, *Comites iuniores*, *Honoriani iuniores* and *stablesiani Italiciani* doubtless all contained a high proportion of Germans or men from the other northern barbarian tribes, the Huns and Alans. By this stage even the legions were probably virtually indistinguishable in their composition from the other categories of unit in the field army. The four *legiones comitatenses* or *palatinae* thought to arrive during this period probably therefore contained a mixture of Romans and barbarians, with a strong German component. Nevertheless, the two African epitaphs which relate to these regiments commemorate men with Romanised names, Reginianus and Ursacius.

More important still is the growing tendency to employ federate bands, a process the African army does not seem to have been immune from. Gothic federates are mentioned with increasing regularity in the fifth century sources.

Nevertheless, the regular units of the field army will have retained a predominantly local character for as long as they continued to exist. The Western Empire was short enough of troops, regular or federate, to man the praesental forces; it

have
is doubtful whether they could spare frequent drafts of their highly regarded German recruits to provide the manpower for the African force. In any case Africa had its own tribesmen both within and beyond the frontiers who were doubtless able to take the place of the Germans.

V.5 THE SIZE OF THE AFRICAN FIELD ARMY

One of the most difficult tasks is to estimate the numbers of Late Roman forces. The particularly intractable issues involved in assessing the size of the frontier forces are addressed in the next chapter (VI.5). In comparison estimating the strength of the regional field army does not present quite so many problems. A number of figures exist which enable the size of comitatensian units to be calculated. These have been exhaustively discussed by scholars of the Later Roman army. An excellent summary of this evidence is provided by Jones (*LRE*, 679-686) and there seems little point in repeating it in detail here. However, one piece of evidence (omitted by Jones) which does relate to Africa is worth noting in greater detail, before going on to assess the strength of the African force.

V.5.1 Mascezel's expeditionary force of 398

We happen to possess considerable detailed knowledge of the expeditionary force sent to North Africa in 398, to suppress the African generalissimo, Gildo. Orosius gives its strength as a mere 5000 men whilst Claudian (*Bell. Gild.* 418-423) lists seven regiments:⁶⁶

*Herculeam suus Alcides, Ioviamque cohortem
rex ducit superum; premitur nec signifer ullo
pondere: festinant adeo vexilla moveri.
Nervius insequitur, meritusque vocabula Felix,
dictaque ab Augusto legio, nomenque probantes
Invicti, clipeoque animosi teste Leones.*

Despite the poetic phraseology which obscures the precise titles of these units, their identity can be restored with near certainty and recent studies by Clemente and Hoffmann have independently arrived at similar conclusions. The *Herculeam* ... *Ioviamque cohortem* are doubtless the senior crack legions of the Western field army, the *Ioviani* and *Herculiani seniores* stationed in Italy according to the *Notitia*. The *legio dicta... ab Augusto* is probably the *Octavani*, another palatine legion which the *Notitia* places in Italy, rather than the *Tertioaugustani* of Africa itself. The *Octavani* originated as a detachment from the old frontier legion *VIII Augusta*. The remaining four - *Nervius*, *Felix*, *Invicti* and the *Leones* - are plausibly identified with *auxilia palatina*. The most plausible candidates are the *sagittarii Nervii*, the *Leones seniores* or *iuniores*, and the paired

66. The size of Mascezel's expedition: Orosius VII, xxxvi, 6, 'ubi cum parva manu, hoc est cum quinque milibus (ut aiunt) militum'.

formation the *Felices seniores* and *Invicti seniores*. These are placed by the *Notitia* in Spain, Gaul/Italy, Spain and Spain respectively.⁶⁷

The rare coincidence, of a figure for the size of a Roman army and a breakdown of the *numeri* comprising it, presents an invaluable piece of data in establishing the size of field army units. Three legions and four *auxilia* here total 5000 men. The most likely equation is that a legion usually consisted of roughly 1000 men whilst an *auxilium palatinum* had a normal strength of c. 500 soldiers.

V.5.2 Assessment

These figures tally with those known from other sources. For example, Constantius II demanded 300 men from Julian's field army units. Likewise, Valens picked 300 soldiers from each regiment to form an advance party to combat the Goths in Thrace. Gratian, also in 377, detached 500 men from each of his campaign legions for a special operation. The numbers suggest that all field army regiments must have been at least 500 men strong whilst legions of comitatenses must have been well over that strength - perhaps mustering on average 1000 men each. The totals are particularly useful because they relate to actual strengths of units on campaign. On this basis Jones has estimated *auxilia palatina* and cavalry vexillations as 500 men each, legions as 1000 men and *pseudocomitatenses* as 500 men again. He admits this may be an under-estimate - some legions may have been more than a 1000 men and some *pseudocomitatenses* were legions and therefore perhaps milliary in strength. Hoffmann (1969, 4) broadly concurs but estimates 800 men per *auxilium*. Some of the differences and uncertainties are not too significant for our purposes since there is only one *auxilium palatinum* in the African registers and no *pseudocomitatenses* at all.⁶⁸

67. For analyses of the regiments making up Mascezel's army see Clemente 1968, 1968, 148-150, and Hoffmann 1969, 105, 321, 374, 376 & 1970, 38, 69, 163, which supersede Cagnat 1913, 92-95 & esp. 732-733.

Ioviani seniores and *Herculiani seniores*: ND Occ. V 145-146 = VII 3-4.

Octavani: ND Occ. V 153 = VII 28. The identification of the *Octavani* and *VIII Augusta* is confirmed by its title - *leg(io) octa(vo) [August]anensium* - on a Valentinianic building inscription from one of the *burgi* along the Swiss Rhine, CIL XIII 11538 = ILS 8949 and cf. Hoffmann 1970, 69. It was one of the batch of six comitatensian legions, including three stationed in Africa, which were upgraded to palatine status late in the *Notitia*'s history.

The *auxilia palatina*: ND Occ. V 170 = VII 121 (*sagittarii Nervii*); ND Occ. V 171 & 172 = VII 65 & 19 (*Leones seniores* and *iuniores*); ND Occ. V 179 = VII 124, V 182 = VII 125 (*Felices seniores* and *Invicti seniores* respectively).

The location of the bulk of these units in either Italy or Spain is a strong argument in favour of their identification with those in Claudian's list. Mascezel's force embarked for Africa at Pisa, and was therefore probably drawn from the praesental army stationed in Italy. As for the three *auxilia* located in Spain, they were probably transferred there along with other praesental units at a later date, when the Spanish *comitiva* was established probably in the second decade of the fifth century.

68. Detachment figures: AM XX iv 2, XXXI xi 2, XXXI x 2. These and other examples are cited by Jones LRE, 681-682. Macmullen 1980, 457-458 denies the possibility of estimating any standard unit strengths at all but he unnecessarily over-complicates matters, ignoring different troop categories, notably the difference between field army and frontier troops.

Using Jones' estimates the field army listed in the *Notitia* - 11 legions, one *auxilium* and perhaps 21 vexillations - would total 22,000 men, comprising 11,500 infantry and 10,500 cavalry. The high proportion of cavalry to infantry - almost 1:1 - is especially noteworthy. A more normal ratio would be 1:2, as encountered in the praesental field armies of the Eastern Empire. This presumably reflects the need to counter fast-moving African horsemen. The total of course relates to the early fifth century and represents the greatest strength of the African field army, after a long period of steady expansion. Earlier figures would have been much lower. An estimate of c. 14,000 troops seems reasonable for the Valentinianic era - 7 legions, one *auxilium* (?) and perhaps 14 vexillations. The original Tetrarchic force is more difficult to gauge. The number of cavalry vexillations at that date is very uncertain, whilst the two legions may have totalled considerably more than 1000 men each. *III Augusta* may well have mustered something close to its Principate strength, and the *Fortenses* may likewise have grossed a few thousand legionaries. A rough guesstimate of 8000-12,000 troops might not be very far from the mark.⁶⁹

V.6 FIELD ARMY DEPLOYMENT

Evidence for the location of the regional field army units is very restricted. Only a few inscriptions and the record of Ammianus associate the regiments of *comitatenses* with specific locations in the region. Yet, the field army was the most powerful force at the disposal of the imperial commanders in North Africa, with an importance out of all proportion to its presence in the archaeological record. It would be all too easy to gain a view of African frontier defence which was skewed towards contribution of the *limitanei*. This presents a striking contrast to the comparable evidence for the Principate. The legion, *III Augusta*, is represented by a huge epigraphic corpus and by extensive archaeological remains at its long-standing base, *Lambaesis*, and well-preserved vexillation forts in the Libyan pre-desert, for example.

Several factors may help to account for this sharp reduction in the quantity of data relating to the region's higher status troops. The purchasing power of military salaries seems to have declined during the third century, with the result that soldiers of the fourth century were perhaps less able than their earlier counterparts to afford inscribed tombstones. Secondly, it is clear from the literary and documentary evidence from the empire as a whole that the Late Roman field army was billeted in the cities of the interior, not stationed in forts on the frontier like the *limitanei*.⁷⁰

69. It is uncertain to what extent *III Augusta* was restored to its former strength after being reformed in 253. Perhaps 3000-4000 men is reasonable. As for the *Fortenses*, some new Diocletianic legions appear to have totalled 5000 as in earlier periods but a figure of 1000 men (or anything in between) is not inconceivable.

70. For the decline in military pay see Jones *LRE*, 31 & 623-624, but cf. Duncan-Jones 1978, esp. 549-552, who argues that levels of pay were higher than those proposed by Jones but still concludes that pay failed to keep pace with inflation.

V.6.1 Billeting

The adoption of billeting (*hospitalitas*) on a wide scale marks a considerable break with earlier Roman imperial practice. During the Principate the forces guarding the Eastern provinces, particularly the legions, were often stationed in cities but even there billeting was not universally adopted. Recent publication (Kennedy & Riley 1990, 124) of an air photograph of Bosra, taken c.1930, makes this point quite dramatically. The unmistakeable shape of a legionary fortress can be discerned, attached to the city. On the other hand troops were housed within the circuit walls at *Dura Europus*, during the third century, but there they actually took over an entire quarter of the city, erecting specialised buildings for their needs and presumably ejecting the civilians from the district.

The changeover to urban billets poses severe problems for archaeologists studying the Roman army. Instead of distinct sites entirely devoted to the basing requirements of the particular units, evidence of the *comitatenses*, the Late Empire's principal combat troops, has to be sought in the context of urban archaeology. It is unlikely that such troops will have left much trace in the archaeological record - a few stray finds and the occasional epitaph, perhaps. The troops were temporarily accommodated for the most part in civilian dwellings which then reverted back to their purely civilian role when the troops moved on. When troops were based in one town for a considerable period more permanent installations might grow up, such as horrea to store supplies, but cities would in any case have some such granary and warehouse provision to store taxes collected in kind from the surrounding countryside. Liebeschuetz (1990, 59-60) has suggested that the location of the arms factories (*fabricae*) recorded in the *Notitia* are a good clue to the main billets of the field army units, but no *fabrica* has yet been conclusively identified or excavated.⁷¹

It is conceivable that billeting was not quite as predominant in Africa as elsewhere. As we have seen many regiments of African *comitatenses* began life as better quality troops of the frontier army (*ripenses*). At that stage they may well have been housed in forts, or at any rate have had permanent quarters, complete with barracks, administrative buildings and storage facilities, in cities. The only survivors of this grade to be listed in the African chapters of the *Notitia*, were the two units of *milites* stationed in Tripolitania (see V.2.4), but elsewhere the former *ripenses* may have continued to use their old stations long after they were theoretically promoted to *comitatensian* rank. As yet none of these 'ripensian' bases have been firmly identified. The large, typologically late, fort at Zebaret et Tir is a

For the use of billeting to accommodate the field army see Jones *LRE*, 631-632, Crow 1981, 48 and Tomlin 1987, 112-113.

71. The best survey of *fabricae* is James 1988.

tempting candidate since its size is anomalous in relation to the other sites of similar form. The presence of epitaphs of *scutarii* and *stablesiani* at Timgad, *Sitifis* and *Thamallula* suggests that a search for permanent military quarters at those three sites might prove fruitful. Indeed, *Sitifis* may well have been the initial base of the *Fortenses*. The legionary vexillations, which I consider were welded together to form this unit, were based there for a time. One might further note that there is no concrete evidence that the fortress at *Lambaesis* was abandoned by *III Augusta*. The fact that the city was chosen by *Flavius Leontius*, *dux per Africam*, as the location of his victory inscription (between 314/320?), would suggest *Lambaesis* remained an important military centre, at least during the early fourth century.⁷²

One concrete piece for the billeting of field army troops in Africa is recorded by *Optatus of Milev* (III, 4), when describing the activities of the imperial commissioners, *Paul* and *Macarius*, in the 340's. The two officials, failing in their mission to resolve the latest Donatist controversy, and fearful for their safety in the face of the Donatist circumcelliones of *Baghai*, appealed to the *comes Africae*, *Silvester*, for assistance. *Silvester* sent troops, who were preceded by *metatores* - billeting officers. Anxious for martyrdom, the *circumcelliones* assaulted the *metatores*. When the latter returned to their regiments (*numeros suos*) the anger, which was aroused amongst their fellow-soldiers, produced the massacre so ardently desired by the Donatists.

V.6.2 Evidence for Field Army Deployment

The epigraphic and literary references indicating the presence of one or more soldiers from a particular field army unit are tabulated below. The table is designed to supplement map V.1 which displays the location of the references in relation to the communications network of the region. The table is divided into four sections; firstly, references to *III Augusta* (which mostly relate to the reign of *Diocletian*), secondly, troops which might have formed part of *Maximian's* expeditionary force, then, cavalrymen from the new tetrarchic cavalry vexillations stationed in the region after 299, and finally, references belonging to the remainder of the fourth

72. The Tripolitanian units: *ND Occ. XXXI 29 'milites Fortenses in castris Leptitanis'*, and *XXXI 30 'milites munifices in castris Madensibus'*. Neither of the two castra has been identified archaeologically. For the possible location of the castra *Madensia* at *Dehibat* (?), or perhaps *Mizda* (??), see section VI.1.3. The *Fortenses*, at *Leptis Magna*, were probably accommodated in permanent, urban quarters. It has been suggested that the Early Islamic fortification, *Gasr el-Hammam*, on the outskirts of *Leptis*, may have been first constructed during the Late Roman or Byzantine periods, and only refurbished later. A Roman date is very tentative, however, and a Roman military attribution still more so - it is unlikely that it represents the castra of the *Fortenses*; cf. *Goodchild & Ward-Perkins 1953B, 73*, *Hutt 1977, 40 pl.8*, *Whitehouse 1971-1972, 19* (I am grateful to *Isabella Sjornstrom* for bringing this site and the references to my attention and discussing it with me).

For *Zebaret et Tir* see below VI.3.1.

Flavius Leontius at Lambaesis: CIL VIII 18129 = ILS 2999, Iovi optimo maximo deorum princip / gubernatori omnium rerum / caeli terrarum/que rectori, ob re/portatam ex gentilibus barbaris / gloriam / Flavius Leontius / v(ir) p(er)fectissimus dux per Afri/cam posuit.

century or early fifth. The two inscriptions referring to 'armigeri', at Zucchabar and Kamellel, have both been included for the sake of completeness but their interpretation is very uncertain.

Table V.5

Location	Unit	Type	Ref
Lambaesis (Castra)	'Leg III Aug Diocletiani et Maximiani Augg nn'	Repair of aqueduct	C.2572 = ILS 5786
"	Leg III Aug p f	Imperial dedication	C.2576
"	Leg III Aug p f	"	C.2577
Lambaesis (Colonia)	'L]egionis [III Aug?'	Road repairs	C.2718
Caesarea	Coh.III praetoria	Epitaph	C.21021 = ILS 2038
Sitifis	II Italica	Epitaph	AE 1972, 709
"	III Italica	Epitaph	AE 1972, 710
"	Cors X et VII, leg II Herculiae	Religious dedication	C.8440 = ILS 4195
Lambaesis	Moesiaci? or one the Moesian legions	Epitaph	C.18290
Theveste	numerus Martensium	Epitaph	C.16551 = ILAlg I 3123
Sitifis	equites stablesiani	Epitaph	C.8490
"	" "	Epitaph	AE 1916, 7-8
Thamallula	" "	Epitaph	AE 1937, 35
Thamugadi	equites scutarii	Epitaph	AE 1946, 42
Caesarea	'primam et secundam legionem' (I Fl. Pacis & II Fl. Virtutis ?)	Literary	AM XXIX v 18 (373)
Zucchabar	'equites quartae sagittariorum cohortis'	"	AM XXIX v 20 (373)
Zucchabar or nearby	'Constianiani pedites'	"	"
Zucchabar	'armiger' (eq Armigeri sen/iun? Armig. propug. sen/iun?)	Epitaph	C.9613
Rusguniae	ex praepositis equitum armigerorum <u>unior	Religious dedication	C.9255 = ILCV 1822
Sitifis	Cimbriani	Epitaph	AE 1984, 940
Thamugadi	Armigeri propugnatores? (Numerus propunnantes!)	Epitaph	AE 1946, 43
Kamellel	'Armigeri' (eq Armigeri sen/iun?) Armig. propug. sen/iun?)	Memorial?	AE 1909, 120 = Monceaux 1908,209 = Guenin 1909,166
Thelepte	Leg.II Flavia Virtutis	Epitaph	C.23181 = ILS 9206
Aubuzza	? tr(ibunus) m(ilitum) For[tensium]?	List of martyrs	C.16396 = ILCV 2092 = Courtois nr.152
Tubunae	Boniface, tribunus	Literary	Aug. Ep. 220.7

| *cum paucis foederatis* | |

The inscriptions mainly comprise epitaphs of individual soldiers or members of their family, with the occasional personal or regimental religious dedication. As such they do not for the most part provide *prima facie* evidence that any particular unit was stationed, even temporarily, at the location where an inscription was found. A notable instance is the church dedication made by Flavius Nuvel, *ex praepositus eq(u)itum armigerorum [i]unior(um)*. Nuvel had already relinquished his command by the time he made the dedication. That he chose *Rusguniae* (Matifou) as the site of the church, which he and his wife built to house their fragment of the True Cross, was surely because it was he was a prominent (and wealthy!) member of local aristocracy. His former military rank was included simply as an indication of Nuvel's high status and not necessarily because the *equites armigeri iuniores* were ever based in *Rusguniae*. Similar comments may be applied to the *tr(ibunus) m(ilitum) For[tensium]* at *Aubuzza*, even if one assumes that uncertain reading to be correct.

Despite the caveats noted above, the combined literary and epigraphic evidence does form a coherent pattern, and there is good reason to believe that it reflects the reality of African field army deployment.

The inscriptions derive from important cities in the interior of the African provinces, cities such as *Theveste*, *Thelepte*, *Timgad* and *Sitifis*. These settlements were all situated at important crossroads, on major regional highways. *Sitifis* in particular has produced sufficient numbers to indicate it was an important military base from the Tetrarchy onwards. This is scarcely surprising. *Sitifis* was the major communications node in eastern Mauretania, serving as the provincial capital of *Sitifensis*. At an earlier date it may well have served as the principal operational base of M. Cornelius Octavianus, *dux per Africam, Numidiam, Mauretaniamque*. Still more noteworthy is the concentration of troops along the *Lambaesis-Timgad-Theveste-Thelepte* route, which clearly emerges as the principal strategic axis of North Africa.⁷³

These results may be combined with the historical details provided by Ammianus, relating to the campaigns of Theodosius the Elder in the Mauretaniae. At the start of the campaign, the units of the African field army were assembled (from dispersed billets presumably) at the *statio Pancharia*, not far from *Sitifis*. Theodosius then marched these '*indigena milite*'

73. Octavianus' campaigns whilst *dux per Africam, Numidiam Mauretaniamque* seem to have been directed against the Bavares in *Sitifensis*/ the area around *Sitifis*; cf. AE 1907, 4 = ILS 9006 (victory inscription set up 17 km WSW of *Sitifis*), CIL VIII 8435 + 20341 = ILS 4498 (dedication from *Sitifis*), and AE 1942-1943, 62 (epitaph, from *Sitifis*, of M. Aurelius Romanus, *cornicularius v.p. praefectus classis praetoriae Misenatium*, probably on Octavianus' staff).

It may be significant that Gildo met Mascezel in battle near the eastern end of this axis, on the river *Ardalio*, between *Ammaedara* and *Theveste*.

on to *Sitifis*, where they were combined with the small force of palatine troops, which he had brought with him from Europe. Unfortunately, *statio Pancharia* cannot be precisely located, but, since it was a *statio*, it is a reasonable assumption that it was situated at a crossroads, where troops arriving from a number of different directions might conveniently be marshalled.⁷⁴

Ammianus also provides some information on the deployment of field army units in *Caesariensis*. Theodosius found the rebellious *equites quartae sagittariorum* at *Zucchabar*, an ancient colony overlooking the central Chélif valley. The *pars Constantiani pedites* may have been situated in the same area, for the two corps were both brought to *Tigava* for punishment. Theodosius is said to have stationed two legions - *I Flavia Pacis* and *II Flavia Virtutis* (?) - at the provincial capital, *Caesarea*.⁷⁵ This may only have been a temporary measure, to repair war damage, but it is noteworthy that one of the epitaphs which may be associated with Maximian's expeditionary force - commemorating a soldier of the *cohors III praetoria* - has also come from this city.

V.6.3 Conclusion

Thus, the pattern of African field army deployment reflected by the epigraphic and literary evidence is entirely plausible. The army would have been dispersed throughout the diocese, with regiments being billeted in cities located along the major communications arteries, and at nodal centres like *Sitifis* and *Caesarea*.⁷⁶

There is little to suggest that either a significant number of *comitatenses* or the *comes* himself was quartered at Carthage, at any rate before the very late fourth-fifth centuries when successive *comites* became heavily involved in imperial politics. Even then, Boniface, the ultimate 'political' *comes*, apparently spent much time at *Tubunae*, in the frontier zone, where he was visited by Augustine. Indeed, the *comes* may well have been peripatetic, with no formal headquarters. The earliest African *duces* and *comites*, like Flavius Leontius (the first *dux per Africam* ?), may have continued to reside at *Lambaesis*.⁷⁷

Such dispersal of the *comitatenses* made it easier to supply them locally and, at least in some instances, may have been designed to provide support for the *limitanei* by stationing a field army unit nearby. In VI.1.4 the possibility is

74. Troops assembled at *statio Pancharia*: AM XXIX v 9, *dux ad recensendas legiones quae Africam tuebantur, ire pergebat ad Pancharianam stationem, quo convenire praeceptae sunt.*

75. See above V.2.3.

76. Even the dubious inscriptions fit into the pattern remarkably well. Kamellel is only a short distance from the strategic Tingad-Mascula-Theveste highway, whilst *Zucchabar* is mentioned by Ammianus.

77. AE 1979, 684, the epitaph of Q. Atilianus cited in section II.1.1, does suggest a centralised military command with headquarters at Carthage. This may however relate to the Tetrarchy when the vicar had overall military authority within the African diocese.

For Augustine and Boniface see Brown 1967, 421-423.

tentatively raised that those Tripolitanian and Caesariensian *limites* which are also listed in the *comes Africae*'s *Notitia* chapter had fallen under his authority because *comitatenses* were stationed alongside the *limitanei*, under unified command.

The pattern of Late Roman deployment is not so dissimilar to that of the Principate, if the *limitanei* stationed in the frontier zone are equated with auxiliaries and the *comitatenses* with the legion *III Augusta*. Of course, the legion had a large, permanent base, whereas the *comitatenses* were probably dispersed in a number of cities, but it is worth emphasising that *III Augusta* was never as concentrated as the archaeological remains of the fortress at *Lambaesis* suggest. The widespread use of legionary vexillations in the frontier zone during the third century is well-known, but even in the second century Hadrian's reference to '*quod multae quod diversae stationes vos distinent*' suggests some dispersal of legionary troops, in addition to the cohort regularly detached to serve with the proconsul. Similarly, *Caesarea*'s abundant military epigraphy for the Principate, demonstrates a constant army presence there, as one might expect at the provincial capital and military headquarters. For much of the first century AD, *Caesarea* was the main base for the entire provincial army, as far as one can judge. One may conclude that although the outward forms had changed greatly, with the transition from the Principate to the Later Empire, the underlying reality of Roman deployment remained relatively constant. Once again, it is important not to allow new names and institutions to obscure the essential continuity of Roman military activity in North Africa.⁷⁸

78. Hadrian's address: *CIL VIII* 2532 = 18042 = *AE* 1900, 33-35 = *ILS* 2487 & 9133-9135.

For the role of *Caesarea* as military quarters in the 1st century AD see Lawless 1970 I, 91-94 and Mattingly 1984, 187.

C O M M E N T A R I U M A F R I C A E.



ND. Occ XXV The Frontier Commands

Bodleian Library Ms. Canon. Misc. 378 fol.151V

CHAPTER VI

THE MILITARY ORGANISATION OF THE FRONTIER ZONE

The territorial organisation of frontier *limites* instituted by Diocletian represents the logical conclusion of trends in Roman frontier policing and deployment which had been progressing since at least the Severan dynasty. These trends may be summarised as the use of vexillations, drawn from single units, to man outposts, the development of composite and possibly impermanent units (*numeri collati*) to perform specialised tasks such as providing infantry garrisons with a mounted component, carrying out building work or manning small outposts, as well as the steady growth of the *de facto* territorial command structure itself. The introduction of the new administrative structure must ^{have} given these trends a further major impetus. Unfortunately, the dearth of epigraphic evidence or the lack of the sort of documentary corpus represented by the Bu Ngem ostraca, makes such further changes very difficult to chart. In Chapter II the evidence for the continued survival of some sort of regimental structure was outlined. The latter part of this chapter will attempt to trace the further evolution of the frontier districts using mainly archaeological evidence. But first a survey of the known commands is set out, based on the principal source for their extent and distribution, the *Notitia Dignitatum*.

VI.1 THE *LIMITES* IN THE *NOTITIA DIGNITATUM*

The list of sector commands (*limites*) in the *Notitia Dignitatum* represents the most important source for the military structure of the North African frontier zone, and the best general indication of where *limitanei* were deployed. Accordingly, the results of previous analyses, together with some new observations, are presented below.

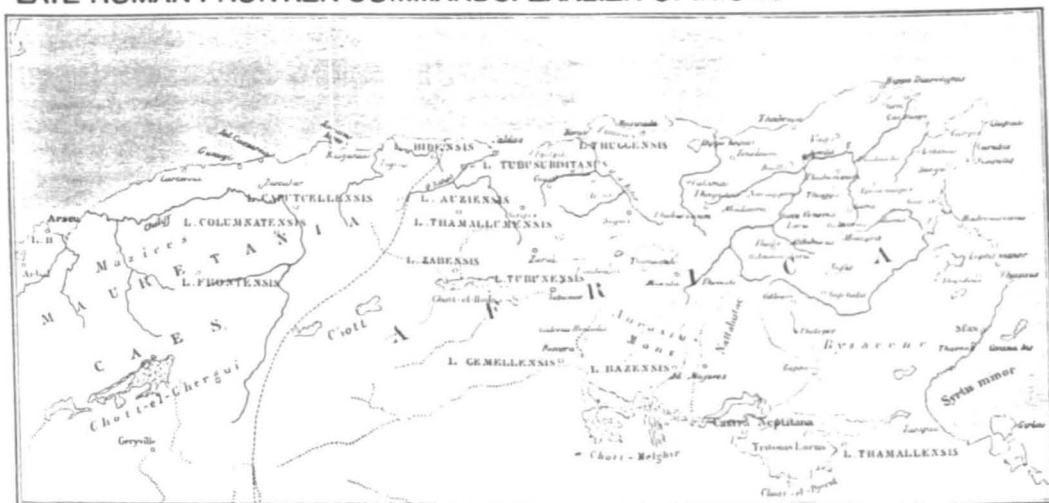
VI.1.1 sub dispositione comitis Africae

The locations of the first eight *limites* listed in the *comes'* chapter are securely identified. The first six are in perfect geographical order and form a line along the outer edge of the provinces of Byzacena, Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis, a continuous frontier zone of the usual type in other words. The next two lie in the interior of Mauretania Sitifensis.

Table VI.1

Entry nr.	<i>Limes</i> command	Location
Occ XXV 21	<i>praep lim. Thamallensis</i>	<i>Turris Tamalleni</i> - Byz.
" 22	" <i>Montensis</i>	<i>Nepte</i> & mountain ranges
" 23	" <i>in castris Neptitanis</i>	to north - Byz.
" 24	" <i>Bazensis</i>	<i>Badias</i> - Numid.
" 24	" <i>Gemellensis</i>	<i>Gemellae</i> - Numid.

LATE ROMAN FRONTIER COMMANDS: EARLIER OPINIONS

CONFINES MILITAIRES DE L'AFRIQUE ROMAINE (IV^e ET V^e SIÈCLES)

Cagnat 1913



Masqueray 1888



Warmington 1954

"	25	"	<i>Tubuniensis</i>	<i>Tubunae</i>	- Numid.
"	26	"	<i>Zabensis</i>	<i>Zabi</i>	- M. Sitif.
"	27	"	<i>Tubusubditani</i>	<i>Tubususctu</i>	- M. Sitif.
"	28	"	<i>Thamallomensis</i>	<i>Thamallula</i>	- M. Sitif.

The remaining entries in chapter XXV are a confused assortment most of which seem to be sited in the areas covered by the two neighbouring ducates. They are listed below. Two should probably be located in Tripolitania, whilst another three definitely recur in the chapter of the *dux Mauritaniae Caesariensis*. These five commands are best studied in conjunction with the other *limites* of Tripolitania and Mauretania Caesariensis as laid out in the chapters of their respective *duces*. However three of the commands in the latter half of the *comes'* list neither recur in the other two chapters nor can be securely placed in those two provinces. It is therefore possible that they lie within the region which formed the core of the count's command, namely the provinces of Proconsularis, Byzacena, Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis, the security of which was his sole responsibility. It is therefore appropriate that they should be considered first.

Table VI.2

Entry nr.		<i>Limes</i> command	Province
Occ XXV 29	<i>praep. lim.</i>	<i>Balaretani</i>	(?)
" 30	"	<i>Columnatensis</i>	= XXX 12 - Maur.Caes.
" 31	"	<i>Tablatensis</i>	= XXXI 18 - Trip. (?) (or Maur.Caes. ?)
" 32	"	<i>Caputcellensis</i>	= XXX 18 - Maur.Caes.
" 33	"	<i>Secundaeorum</i>	= XXXI 21 - Trip.
"	<i>in castris</i>	<i>Tillibanensibus</i>	
" 34	<i>praep. lim.</i>	<i>Taugensis</i>	Maur.Sitif. (?)
	(XXV 16 =	<i>Tangenses</i>)	or Maur.Caes. (?)
" 35	<i>praep. lim.</i>	<i>Bidensis</i>	= XXX 13 - Maur.Caes.
" 36	"	<i>Badensis</i>	= XXV 23 - Numidia (or Numid./M.Sitif?)

One of these three sectors, the *limes Balaretanus*, is unlocatable. Various identifications with places mentioned in other sources have been proposed in the past. None of the equations is very convincing. In any case, the supposed equivalent sites, named in the other sources, are themselves unlocated save that they are specified as having lain in the late province of Mauretania Caesariensis.¹

1. Cagnat 1913, 755, includes a comprehensive discussion of the identifications proposed and is suitably cautious, if not dismissive, about them all. Seeck, in his edition of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, suggested as a possible candidate the bishopric of *Castelli iabaritanus*, recorded by the episcopal *notitia* of 484 (*Not. prov. Maur.Caes.* 65). The site would presumably have been a *Castellum* (*Ia*)*bar..*, or something similar, not nearly close enough to *limes Balaretanus* = *Balar..* to inspire any confidence whatsoever. Masqueray (1886, 65) proposed as a candidate the site '*Quabar*' (ie. *Vabar*), mentioned by Ptolemy (*Geog.* IV, ii), and identified *Vabar* in turn with another bishopric in the 484 *notitia*, *Bapara* (*Not. prov. MC* 98). B and V are virtually interchangeable in the context of Latin and Greek, especially late Latin; similarly p and b may represent the same consonant, but the similarity to *Balar..* is not sufficiently close to be convincing.

The second example is almost equally difficult to pin down, partly because it occurs in two different forms, *Tangenses* in the chapter heading and *praepositus limitis Taugensis* in the main section. The resultant uncertainty has spawned two alternative locations. The *limes* has been placed either in Mauretania Caesariensis or on the border between Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis. The most commonly accepted identification is derived by emending *Taugensis* to *T<a>ug(g)ensis* and equating *Tugga* with *Tucca*, a name applied to two sites on the Oued el-Kebir, the ancient *Ampsaga*, which formed the boundary between Numidia and Mauretania. One is placed by the ancient sources at the mouth of the river, between Jijel (*Igilgili*) and Collo (*Chullu*); the other lies some 40 km inland where the river turns from an easterly to a northerly course, breaking through the barrier of the Lesser Kabylie to reach the sea. The *Tucca* option is favoured by Bocking, Masqueray, Cagnat, and Warmington. However, Gsell (AAA 8,5) was very sceptical, whilst Matthews (1976, 168-169) has suggested that the *limes* should be sought further west, in Late Roman Mauretania Caesariensis, drawing attention to the version preserved in most copies of the chapter title page - *Tangenses*. He interprets this as *T[i]ng[itan]enses* and places the headquarters of the military district at *Castellum Tingitanum* in the lower Chélif valley. This may not look very convincing but the *comes'* list does contain another *limes* the name of which has been truncated, the *limes Thamallensis*, which should read *Thamallenensis* and refers to *Turris Tamalleni*.²

Both locations are plausible in historical and strategic terms. The *limes Taugensis* = *Tuccensis* would lie in the very area where the mid third century legate C. Macrinus Decianus began his sweep through the Babors and Kabylie mountains subduing dissident tribes, *primum in regione Millevitana, iterato in confinio Mauretaniae et Numidiae*. It might reflect the stationing of soldiers on the provincial boundary in the aftermath of Decianus' and Octavianus' campaigns in the 250's, in order to police the mountains and ensure the security of communications between *Milev* and *Cirta* on the one hand and the coastal ports of *Igilgili*, *Chullu* and *Rusicade* on the other. The *limes Tangensis*=*Tingitanensis* equation would, as Matthews observes, accord well with the events documented by Ammianus Marcellinus. The latter makes no explicit reference to *Castellum Tingitanum* being a permanent military headquarters but Theodosius, after marching down the Chélif valley, does appear to have used the city as a base from which he could sally forth to harass tribes such as the *Musones*. The road along the Chélif valley was one of the most important arterial routes in the province. Continuing imperial interest in the route is demonstrated by the milestones found near *Tigava* and by the presence of regional field army troops in this area. Theodosius encountered the *equites quartae sagittariorum* at

2. *Tangenses* ND Occ. XXV, 16 and *Taugensis* ND Occ. XXV, 34. For the identification with *Tucca* see Bocking 1839, 531, Masqueray 1886, 69, Cagnat 1913, 757 and Warmington 1954, 22. For the two sites identified with *Tucca* see AAA 8,5 (Nerdja) and 8,71 (Henchir el-Abiod); also Salama 1980, 106 & map facing p.134.

For *Castellum Tingitanum* see AAA 12,174.

ND Occ. XXV, 2 & 21 for the *limes Thamallensis*; Trouset 1974, 43-46, for the site.

Zucchabar overlooking the route. A powerful tribe, the *Mazices*, was esconced in the mountains to the north - the Zaccar and Dahra ranges. Also worth noting in this context is the victory inscription set up by Aelius Aelianus at *Manliana* in the late third century. In these circumstances it is likely that the security of communications along this route would have been of paramount importance. Finally, it is worth emphasising that neither of the two locations proposed for this *limes* need be correct; it is quite possible that the command was centred somewhere else entirely.³

The final entry in the *comes'* list, the *limes Badensis*, may well represent a duplication of the *limes Bazensis* cited above. Diehl (1896, 248) and Desanges (1963, 57 and 1964, 40-41), however, argued that it might be identical with a homonym, which Ptolemy locates just south of *Tucca* (Henchir el Abiod), in Mauretania. This would place the *limes* on the southern edge of the Babors massif, in the area of the Numidian-Mauretanian boundary, and close to one of the members of the Cirtan confederation, *Milev* (Mila). To support his case Desanges pointed to the apparent juxtaposition of *Milev* (*Meleon*) and *Bade* or *Bades* in two Byzantine sources, Procopius' *De Aedificiis* (VI vii 8) and George of Cyprus' *Descriptio Orbis Romani* (659 & 659a). If Desanges' hypothesis is correct it is unlikely that the *limes Badensis* could have co-existed with a *limes Tuggensis*, since they lie too close together, though the *limes Badensis* could conceivably represent a late shift of sector headquarters from *Tucca* to *Bades*. Recently, Pringle (1981, 306) and Troussel (1985, 371-373) have reviewed the evidence regarding *Badias*, in the Byzantine sources, and have persuasively argued that they all refer to the settlement south of the Aurés. This in turn weakens the case for a separate northern identity for the *limes Badensis*, since it can no longer be established that the site was an important flourishing centre in Late Antiquity. On balance, therefore, the *limes Badensis* most probably does represent a duplication of the *limes Bazensis*. It doubtless originated because the officials who compiled the *Notitia* failed to recognise a variant spelling in one of the returns from the count's *officium*, and simply tacked the 'new' command on to the very end of the list of *praepositi* in *Occ. XXV*.⁴

3. Decianus' campaigns: *CIL VIII* 2615 = *ILS* 1194.

A lacuna in Ammianus' text (*XXIX*, v, 27) makes it impossible to say with absolute certainty that Theodosius launched his campaign against the *Musones* from *Castellum Tingitanum* but it was clearly his destination when he set out from *Tigava* to undertake a sweep through the territory of the *Mazices*, *per Ancorarium montem* (the Dahra massif north of the Chélif?), cf. *AM XXIX*, v, 25. For the *Mazices* see above *IV.2.1*.

Late Imperial milestones near *Tigava*: *CIL VIII* 22570-22578; cf. Salama 1966, 1299-1300.

The *equites quartae sagittariorum* at *Zucchabar* cf. *AM XXIX*, v, 20.

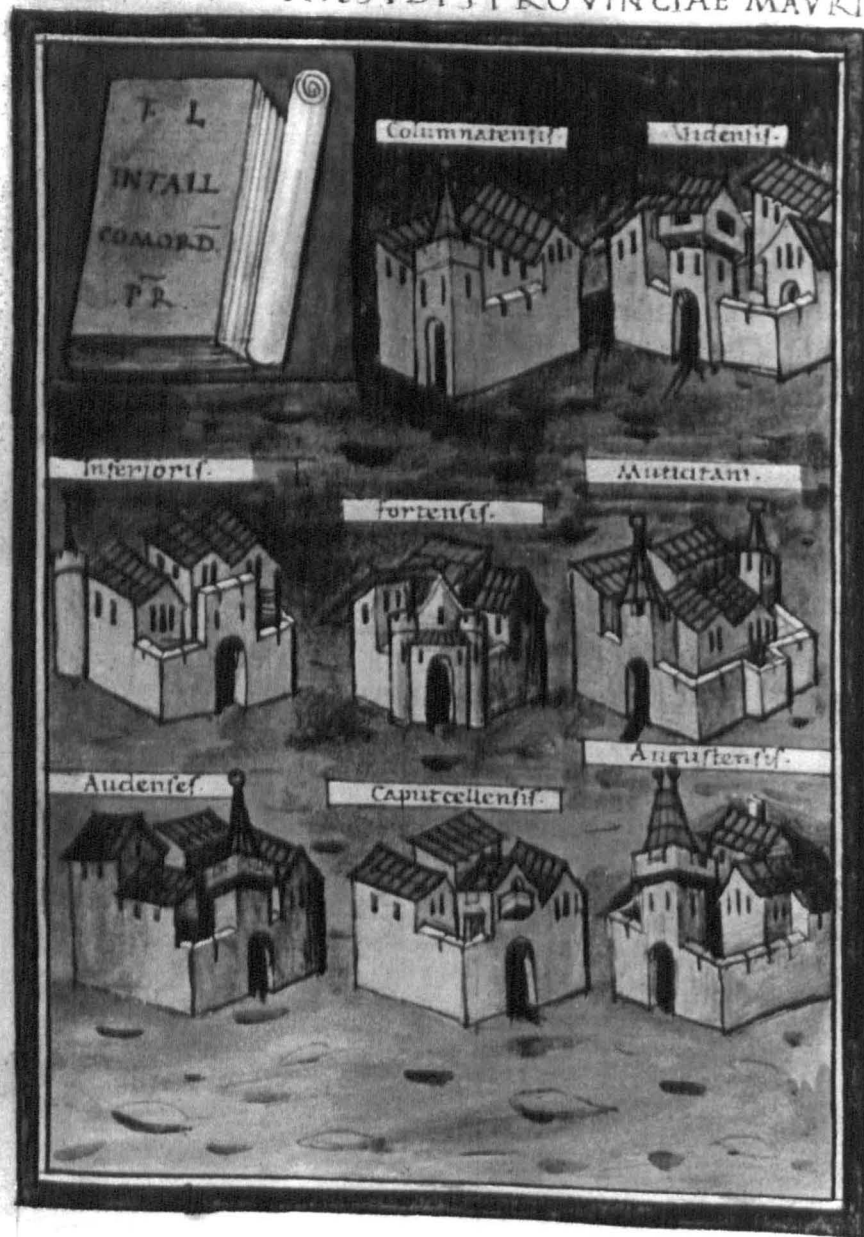
Aelius Aelianus' victory *ob prostratum gentem Bavarum Mesegneitsium*: *CIL VIII* 21486 = *ILS* 4495.

4. *ND Occ. XXV*, 18: *Badenses*; *XXV*, 36: *praepositus limitis Badensis*.

Ptolemy (*IV ii* 6) actually places '*Badea*' in Mauretania *Caesariensis*, not Numidia.

Pringle (1981, 306) notes, for example, that of the two *episcopi Vadenses* listed in the *Notitia Provinciarum* of 484 one (*Not. prov. Numid.* 117) was cited as deceased; it is likely that the other, *Rufianensis* (*Numid.* 7), was his successor and that both entries refer to the same see. Furthermore he points out that the juxtaposition of '*Bades*' and '*Meleon*' in George of Cyprus' list is not significant since George of Cyprus does not follow any geographical order within each province, cf. map 6, pp.535-537. Troussel has convincingly demonstrated that the nearby 'trapezoidal' fort at *Thabudeos* was Justinianic.

DVCIS ET PRAESIDIS PROVINCIAE MAVRITANIAE



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VI.1.2 Mauretania Caesariensis

Turning to Mauretania Caesariensis the chapter of the *dux et praeses Mauretaniae Caesariensis* contains eight *praepositi limitum*, three of which are also found in the *comes'* list. These are set out below. It is worthwhile emphasising that only four can be located. Half the frontier commands in Caesariensis cannot be identified. It is, therefore, utterly spurious to attempt to use the chapter as evidence that the western part of the province was abandoned in the fourth century.⁵

Table VI.3

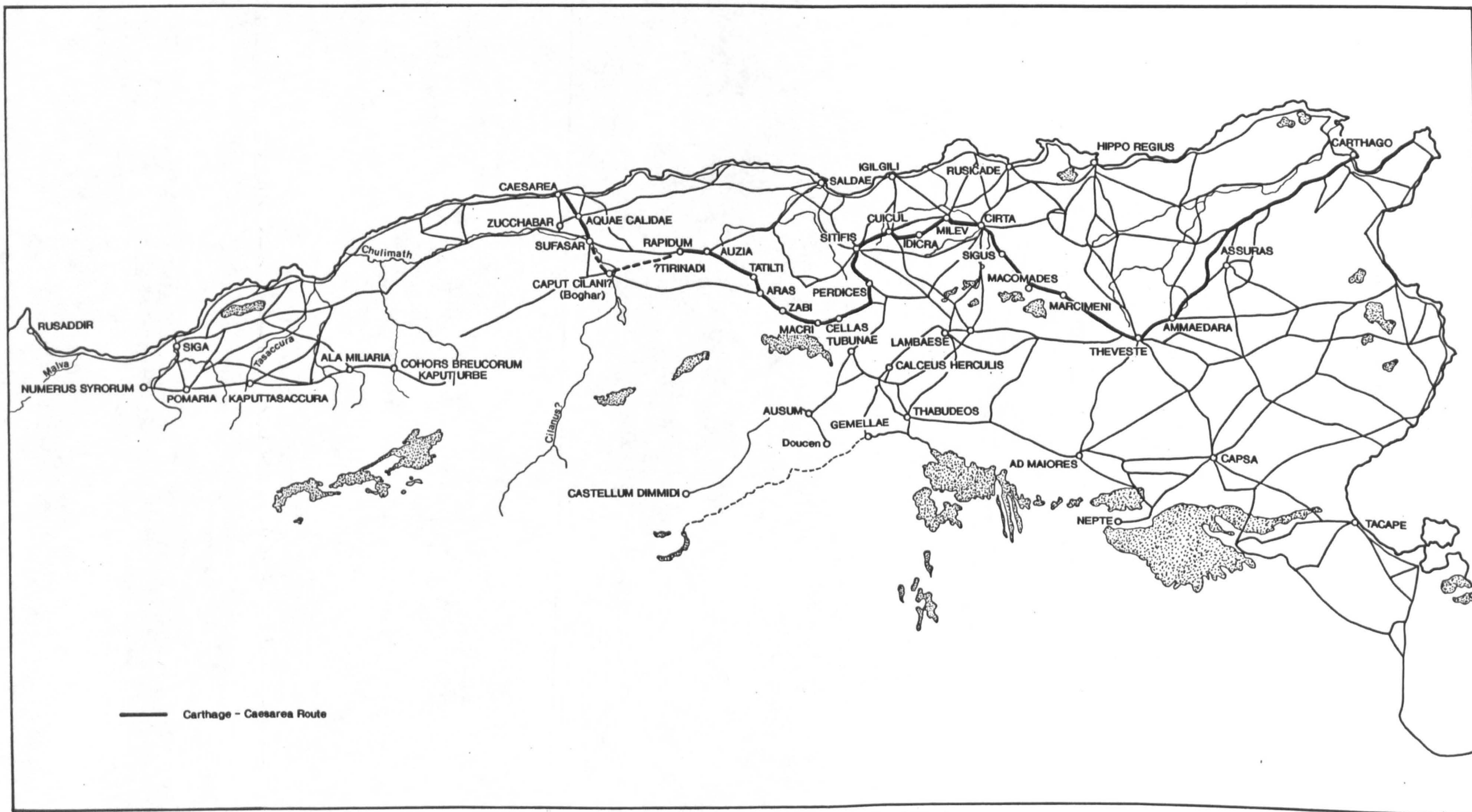
Entry nr.			<i>Limes</i> Command	Location
Occ XXX 12 = XXV 30		<i>praep. lim.</i>	<i>Columnnatensis</i>	<i>Columnnata</i>
" 13 = " 35		"	<i>Vidensis</i>	<i>Bida</i>
" 14		"	(= <i>Bidensis</i>)	
" 15		"	<i>inferioris</i>	(?)
" 16		"	<i>Fortensis</i>	(?)
" 17		"	<i>Muticitani</i>	(?)
" 18 = " 32		"	<i>Audiensis</i>	<i>Auzia</i>
" 19		"	<i>Caputcellensis</i>	<i>Caput Cilani</i>
		"	<i>Augustensis</i>	(?)

A number of general comments may be made regarding this list. Firstly, it clearly does not follow any geographical order. The first entry, *limes Columnnatensis*, is immediately followed by the *limes Vidensis*. The former should be located at *Columnnata* in west-central Caesariensis, the latter is almost certainly to be identified with *Bida* in Grande Kabylie at the eastern end of the province. Whilst *Columnnata* lies on the Severan *praetentura*, *Bida* (Djemaa-n'Saharidj) is scarcely more than 20 km from the coast. The *limes Audiensis*, which was geographically situated in between these two, is placed much further down the list.

These three *limites* can be firmly identified. One other can be roughly localised with some confidence. The *limes Caputcellensis* is usually equated with the site *Caput Cilani* recorded by the Antonine Itinerary on one of the two routes leading from *Rapidum* to *Sufasar*. *Caput Cilani* may thus be located somewhere to one side or the other of a line drawn between *Rapidum* and *Sufasar*. Considering the detours this

Its dimensions and many of its construction details are virtually identical to the fort at Timgad, built in 539-540. The likely presence of *Thabudeos*, in the form '*Dabousis*', along with Timgad, *Bagai*, '*Bade*' and '*Meleon*' in the list of sites which Procopius states were fortified by the Justinian's army 'around' or 'in the neighbourhood of' the Aurès strengthens the argument that some of these fortifications lay south of the massif and that it is the southern *Badias* which is referred to in this passage. In any case it is arguable whether either *Wilev* or the postulated location for Ptolemy's '*Badea*' could be said to be in the neighbourhood of the Aurès.

5. The idea, sustained by Albertini (1928, 48), Carcopino (1940 = 1943, 233-244) and Courtois (1955, 79-91), that western Caesariensis was abandoned by Diocletian has been demolished by Salama (1954, 1955 and - conclusively - 1966).



The Course of the Carthage to Caesarea Road via Caput Cilani

particular route makes elsewhere in its journey from Carthage to *Caesarea* - Carthage to *Cirta* via *Theveste* and *Sitifis* to *Auzia* via *Cellas*, *Macri* and *Zabi* - *Caput Cilani* could lie some considerable distance north or south of the direct line. This observation is confirmed by the fact that the most direct *Rapidum-Sufasar* route, through *Berrouaghia* (*Thanaramusa Castra*), is taken by the alternative road listed in the *Antonine Itinerary*. Therefore, rather than locating *Caput Cilani* somewhere in the rugged country separating *Berrouaghia* and *Medea* from the plains of the *Chélif* valley, a more southerly candidate may be proposed, namely *Boghar*, overlooking the *Chélif* (the *Cilanus*?). It was the site of a *Severan* fort, on *praetentura* road. *Boghar*'s identification with *Caput Cilani* would help to fill the gap in Late Roman dispositions, between *Columnata* and *Zabi*, on the *praetentura* (although it would also entail emending the *Caput Cilani-Sufasar* mileage, recorded by the *Itinerary*, from XVI to XXVI). Whether or not this hypothesis is proved to be correct the *limes* can at least be approximately localised.⁶

This is more than can be said for the remaining sector commands. At least the *limes Muticitanus* relates to a particular settlement, district or community, *Mutic..* or *Mutec...* There is hope it may one day be revealed by a chance epigraphic discovery. One can be confident that the name is reasonably accurate for it features in the *Notitia* of 484 where one '*Quintasius, Mutecitanus*' is listed amongst the bishops of *Mauretania Caesariensis*.⁷

6. *Caput Cilani*: *Itin Ant* 31, 2; cf. *Not. prov. Maur. Caes.* '*Fortis, Caput Cillensis*'.

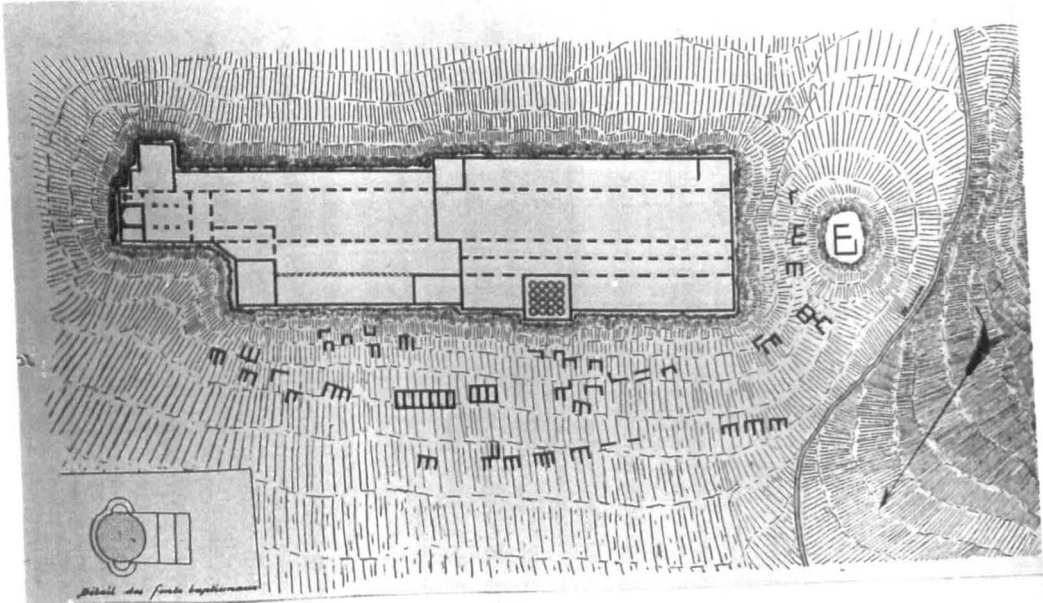
The Carthage-Caesarea iter is *Itin Ant* 24,6-31,5.

The uncertain section 30,7-31,3: *Rapidi* - m.p. XXV - *Tirinadi* - m.p. XXV - *Caput Cilani* - m.p. XVI - *Sufasar*.

Cf. *Itin Ant* 38,5-38,9 for the alternative *Sufasar-Rapidum* route via *Velisci* and *Thanaramusa Castra*. *Caput Cilani* has been identified with *Gouéa* (AAA 14,60), west of *Berrouaghia* (Salama 1951, 122 & map and cf. 1977, 583 nr.12 & 594). This must be rejected. Gsell's plan and description (1901, II, 198-200 fig.122) demonstrate beyond doubt the site was a monastery, perhaps fortified. In addition *Gouéa* lies on or close to the course probably taken by the *Velisci-Thanaramusa* route; nor do the recorded distances from *Rapidum/Sufasar-Caput Cilani* accord with those to *Gouéa*.

Caput names are typical of riverine sites on the *praetentura*. They mark, not the actual source, but rather the highest Roman settlement on that river, cf., for example, *Kaputtasaccura* (*Sidi Ali ben Youb*, ex *Chanzy*) on the *Tasaccura* (mod. *Oued Sig*). The *Cilanus* (?) or *Cell..* would thus be the *Chélif*, the major river in this area. This is known to have been labelled the *Chulimath* (not the *Chinalaph*) in Antiquity. Allowing for different dialectic pronunciation along the river's course, or perhaps simplified Latinisation of an Moorish name, it seems possible to equate these two names: *Chuli...* and *Cila...* The modern *Chélif* in any case has an entirely different name above *Boghar* - the *Nahr Ouassel*. Note also AM XXIX v 20: *municipium Sugabarritanum, Transcellensi monti accline. Zucchabar*, which overlooks the *Chélif*, lay on the slope of the *Mons Transcellensis*, confirming the association of the *Cell...* label with the *Chélifian* region. For *Boghar* see AAA 24,8, Lawless 1970 II, 184 nr.77 and Salama 1977, 585; cf. *CIL VIII* 20847: *Severan* dedication - AD 198 (construction of the fort?), *CIL VIII* 9230: fragment of a Late Imperial inscription (milestone?).

7. At one stage *Mutic..* was identified with the fortified hilltop village of *Ain el-Aneb* (AAA 23,17), just south of the *praetentura* near *Ain Tissemsilt* and *Ain Toukria*, on the basis of the initial reading of *CIL VIII* 21530. However revision of the inscription by Gsell substituted *filium vvvegi, Muvegi* or *Muvecii* for *castellum Muteci*; cf. Cagnat 1913, 758-759 and Courtois 1955, 376, nr.76; [...]*ciaubid* (?) *civ[.]tas, filium / Muvecii pos(i)tum / a(nno) p(rovincia) ccccxix et (vi)iii*. The first two (?) words, which doubtless contain the name of the man who erected the inscription, are very uncertain. From its shape the stone probably surmounted a doorway and represents a building inscription.



Gouea: Monastic Site?

(after Gsell 1901 A)

The *limes inferior* presumably lay along the lower reaches of one of the major rivers of *Caesariensis*. The Chélif is a likely candidate, as is the Tafna, which effectively formed the western edge of the province, but others such as the Sig, the Mina or the Oued el-Hammam cannot be excluded. In all these cases the river valley was followed by an important Roman road. The need to protect communications along such a route might justify the establishment of a military command during the late empire. Alternatively, the label may refer to a part of *Caesariensis* and be related to Roman geographical perceptions, which would doubtless seem strange to modern eyes and hence be difficult to predict.⁸

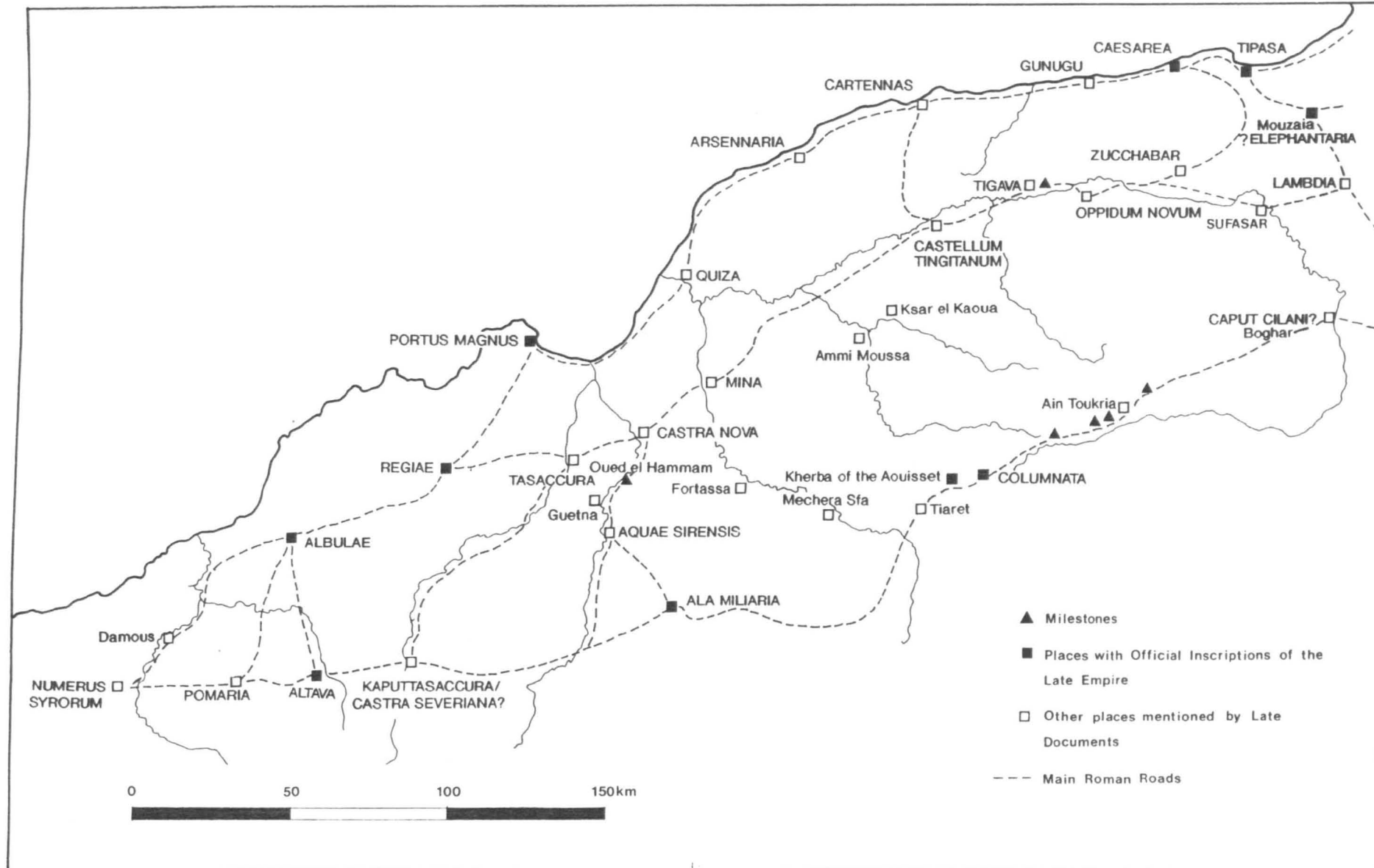
The *limes Augustensis* and the *limes Fortensis* are names typical of Late Roman military units or bases.⁹ Note, for example, the presence of the *Fortenses*, paired with the *Tertio Augustani*, amongst the *legiones comitatenses* of Africa. Both *legio III Augusta* and the *Fortenses* probably formed part of the Diocletianic garrison of Africa (see above V.2.1-2), but there is no need to assume that detachments from the two legions were stationed in these Mauretanian *limes*-sectors. The *limes Augustensis* might reflect the campaigns of the Maximian in the diocese in 296-297. A fort built or rebuilt under his gaze may have been named *Augusta* in his honour and then given its name to the surrounding military district. It is at any rate impossible to locate and is likely to remain so.

In contrast, several attempts have been made to identify the *limes Fortensis*. The most popular suggestion involves emending *Fortensis* to *Frontensis*, inspired by the existence of an *episcopus Frontensis* in the *Notitia* of 484, and equating *Fronta* in turn with present-day Frenda, a small town which lies south of the mountain range of the same name and close to the Severan military road. The identification was supported by Böcking and Cagnat (1913, 758) and has since been cautiously accepted by Matthews (1976, 169). However, no traces of an ancient settlement are known at Frenda itself. The nearby site of Aïoun Sbiba was a sizeable town in Antiquity, with a definite Roman military presence from the Severan era onwards, but it is known from milestones to have been entitled *Cen* (*Gent* in the *Ravenna Cosmography*). This rules out the possibility that it might have been labelled

8. For the suggestion that the *limes inferior* was located along the lower Chelif valley see Courtois 1955, 85-86, though his argument for placing it there, namely that it formed part of the western frontier of a truncated *Caesariensis* may be firmly rejected, see below. For the route from *Numerus Syrorum* down the Oued Tafna to Siga and the coast see Salama 1966/1967.

As an example of Roman geographical concepts regarding 'upper' and 'lower' see Dio LXXVI, 13: where he uses the title Lower Mauretania to signify Tingitana. More comprehensible is the label *ulterior* likewise applied to Tingitana, cf. *CIL VIII* 21813 = *IAN II*, 6 and see Desanges 1960: *provinciae no[vae Mauretaniae] ulterioris Tin[gitanae]*.

9. For example compare the *auxilia Augustensia* in *Pannonia Secunda*, *ND Occ.* XXXII, 41, and the *auxilia Fortensia* in *Valeria*, *ND Occ.* XXXIII, 49. Not surprisingly, *Fortenses* is a particularly common regimental name, see V.2.2.



Western Mauretania Caesariensis in the Later Roman Empire

(after Salama 1966 with modifications)

Fronta before a putative settlement and name shift to present-day Frenda.¹⁰

If the *Fortensis*=Frenda equation seems tenuous, involving a double uncertainty (as Matthews admits), that proposed by Courtois (1955, 85-86) is completely manufactured. This scholar placed the *limes* along the Oued el-Ardjem and the Oued Riou in the western Ouarsenis by resorting to a convoluted argument which focussed on the castle of Ksar el-Kaoua and its dedicatory inscription (*CIL* VIII 21533). The latter is usually read, following La Blanchère (1883, 118), as *Spes in Deo, Ferini, amen* - 'Trust in God, Ferinus, amen!' - an appropriate exhortatory reminder for a member of the Christian aristocracy of western Caesariensis. Courtois, reviving an earlier anonymous reading, suggested *Fertni* instead of *Ferini*, and interpreted this as the name of the site itself, 'Fert(i)num'. This in turn, he argued, could have been applied to a *limes*, supporting his emendation of *Fortensis* to 'Fert(in)ensis'.

Salama (1959, 354 and 1966, 1310) was justifiably scathing regarding the ingenious '*limes Fertinensis*'. The fortifications like Kaoua, which Courtois argued were part of the *limes*, were actually the strongholds of powerful local families, whilst the free-standing towers identified by some early surveys are not watchtowers but tower-like mausolea where the Romano-Moorish nobility resided after death. The sites are scattered throughout the fertile valleys of the western Ouarsenis, a distribution clearly associated with the control and exploitation of agricultural resources rather than the defence of an imaginary line.¹¹

A third alternative, hinted at by Salama (1951) and Van Berchem (1952, 40), focusses on Fortassa, which lies at the confluence of the Oued el-Abd and the Oued Mina. Not only was it the site of a Roman village or small town, but also it probably lay on a relatively important ancient road lined by a number of settlements including a fortified town at Souama of Mechera Sfa. The route followed the valley of the Mina, which divides the Ouarsenis Massif from the Frenda, Saida and Beni Chougran Mountains, and thereby links the steppe zone of the Sersou and the High Plateaux with the Chélifian plains and the coast. No milestones have been found on this road, but its protection might have been regarded as being of some importance. This identification thus has a number of points in its favour, but it remains very speculative. Ultimately, it rests on the assumption that the current name Fortassa derived directly from the title of the *limes*, that the settlement surrounding the military headquarters took the name of the *limes* in Late Antiquity. Even if the fort which served as the central base of the command was itself named *Fortis*, *Fortensium* or something similar, it is difficult to believe that something so essentially ephemeral as the title of a

10. The area north of Frenda is admittedly one of blanks in the *Atlas archéologique*, indicating a lack of survey work in this area, in contrast to the western Ouarsenis.

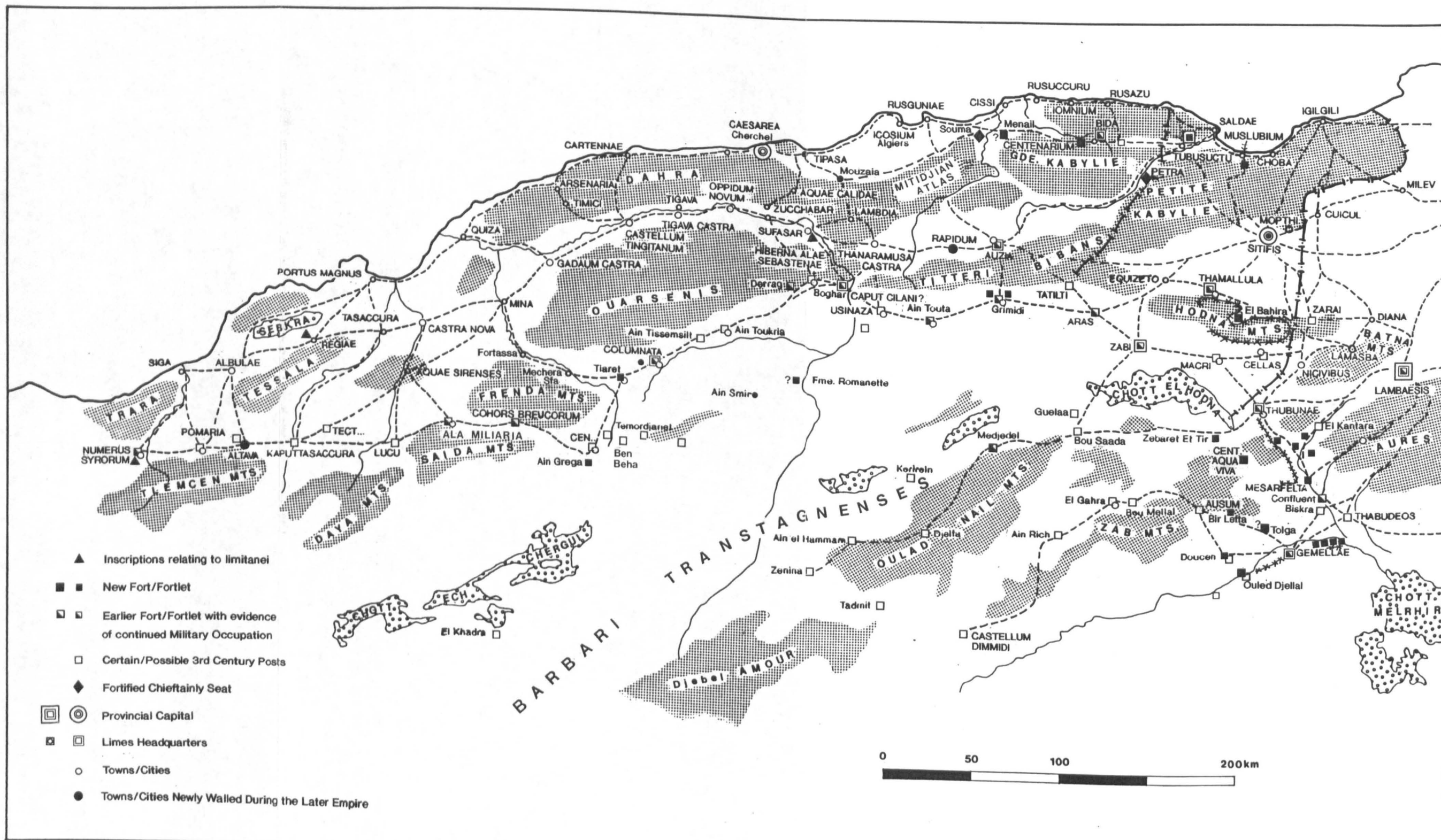
11. See Lawless 1970, 115-120 for a useful summary of these sites and especially fig.25, an excellent distribution map of the fortified villas and mausolea. For site references see VIII.2.2.

military command could have given rise to such a long-lasting name. The regimental names of the settlements on the *Nova Praetentura*, which derived from their Severan garrison units, form a useful comparative control. None of them has survived to this day.¹²

In sum, it must be emphasised that there is no pressing need to emend the *Notitia* at all; the title *limes Fortensis* is entirely in keeping with the nomenclature of the period and probably does represent the correct designation of this command. Thus, it does not greatly matter whether or not *Frenda* can be equated with the bishopric of *Frontensis*. Secondly, it is surely prudent to accept that the location of the *limes* cannot be fixed. It is the desire on the part of modern scholars to locate these commands which provides the main impetus for the identifications outlined above. This is particularly the case with Courtois' '*limes Fertinensis*', which clearly owes more to his preconceived idea that Late Roman North Africa had undergone severe territorial amputation, than to any solid evidence. In fact, the *limes Fortensis* may well disguise a site well-known to scholars of North African frontier, such as *Ala Miliaria* or *Numerus Syrorum*.

Three of the duke's *limites* recur in the *comes Africae*'s chapter, the *limes Vidensis* (= *Bidensis* in chapter XXV), the *limes Columnatensis* and the *limes Caputcellensis*. In addition some of the commands which are listed under the *comes Africae* but are not repeated in the *dux* chapter may nevertheless lie in *Caesariensis*. Two of these, the *limes Balaretanus* and the *limes Tangensis* (?), have been discussed above. There is one other, the *limes Tablatensis*, which just possibly might belong to the Mauretanian command, rather than the Tripolitanian ducate to which it is usually assigned. Courtois (1955, 85-86, 115 & 121) and Matthews (1976, 169) suggested that the town of Tablat in the Blida Atlas may represent the general area of the *limes*. A 70 x 25 m circuit was identified by Piton (1935, 234) in this region, 1.3 km south-west of Tablat. The command would presumably have been established to protect communications between the coastal Mitidja plain and the Beni Slimane plain north and west of *Auzia*. Although an apparently plausible case can be made out for the *Tablat-Tablatensis* identification it is worth emphasising that it rests ultimately on the similarity between the modern toponym and the ancient one as recorded in the *Notitia*. There is no other evidence that there was a sizeable centre bearing a similar name at or near Tablat in Antiquity, let alone any direct indication that the district was the focus of Late Roman

12. For the importance of this route see Salama 1966, 1310, n.1. Curiously Salama marks Fortassa as *Fronta*(?) on the map attached to, and in the index for, his 1951 work *Les voies romaines de l'Afrique du Nord*. He is followed by Van Berchem 1952, 40. Fortassa (ex Uzes le-Duc, now Oued el-Abtal): AAA 22,43 & add; Souama of Mechera Sfa: AAA 33,3, Cadenat 1953, 179 & 1957, 86-87; cf. also Sidi Ali ben Amar near Ain Sarb: AAA 33,12, Cadenat 1957, 87 and Lawless 1970, 140-142, which has produced a Philippan dedication, BSGAO 1903, 138-139 (Derrien). The name of the dedicant(s), whether an individual, a military unit or a civil community has been lost but it is clearly neither a milestone nor a building inscription. It might derive from a fortlet, or some other element relating to the organisation of the road.



Later Roman Military Deployment in Caesariensis and Western Numidia

military organisation. As in the case of *Frenda-Frontensis-Fortensis* the double uncertainty renders this type of argument especially suspect. In this particular case it seems more likely that the *limes* should be located in Tripolitania.¹³

Before moving on to the Tripolitanian section it is worthwhile making a general observation regarding the probable role of the Mauretanian *limites* since it has profound implications concerning the location of the uncertain commands.

The four securely identified *limes* headquarters all lie on major roads. The case of *Auzia* is particularly notable since it stands at a major crossroads. *Bida* is positioned in the Grande Kabylie on the east-west route north of the Djurdura range, whilst *Columnata* and perhaps *Caput Cilani* lie on the *praetentura*. *Caput Cilani*, whether or not it should be equated with Boghar, was definitely connected with *Rapidum* and *Sufasar*. On the principle of using the known sites to illuminate the unknown, one may assume that the four unidentifiable examples similarly lie along major provincial arteries, including the *praetentura*. As noted above, three are geographically non-specific, so their headquarters could lie anywhere on the road network. Nor can such a location be ruled out in the case of *Mutic*.. simply because it is not named either on any milestones or in any of the itineraries. These sources, even when combined, do not give a comprehensive view of the road network of *Caesariensis*. For instance neither itinerary incorporates the full length of the *praetentura*, and as a result the names of many of the settlements along it remain unknown or uncertain, particularly in the west and centre, despite the discovery of numerous milestones on the route.¹⁴

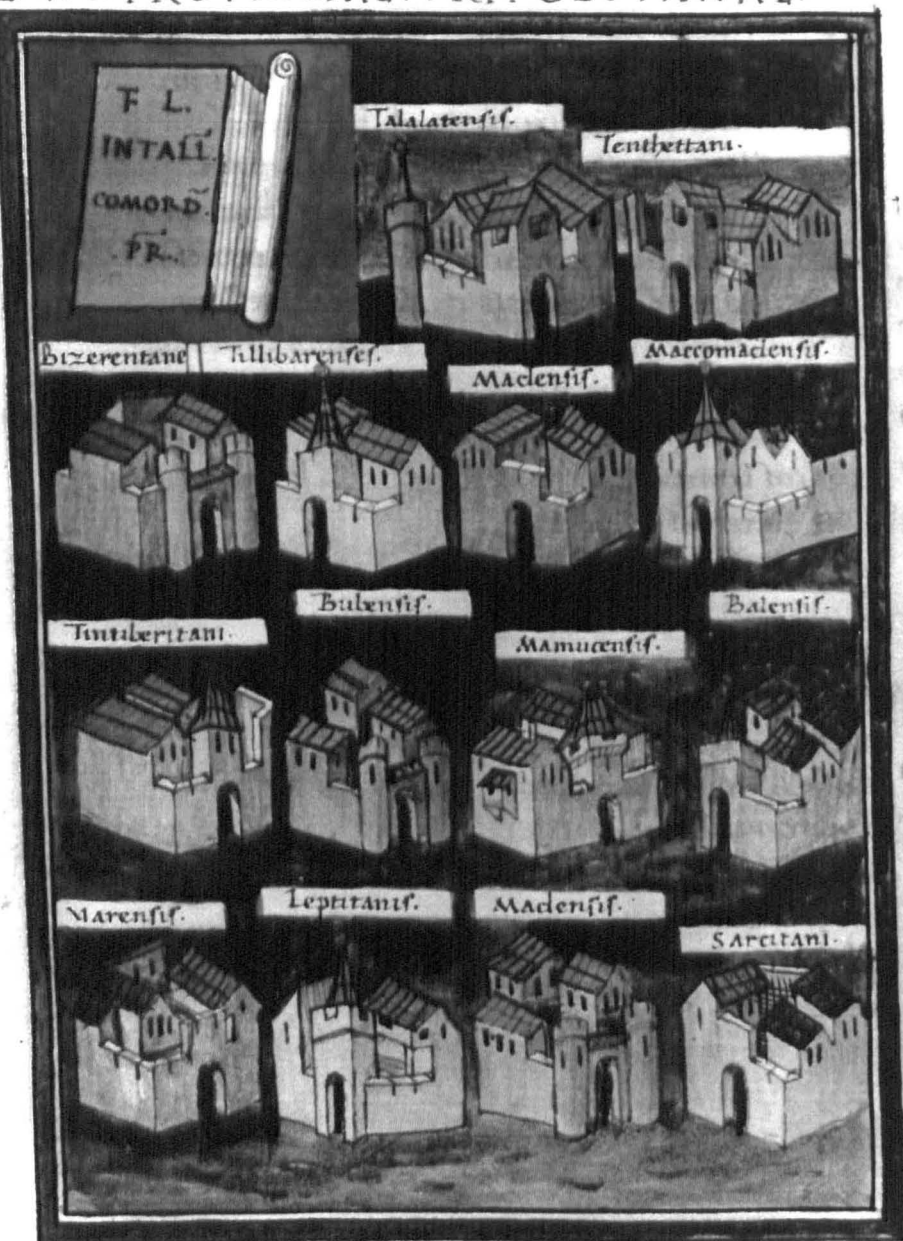
Thus, attempts to centre these *limites* on modern towns with similar names, are especially suspect because they take little account of the Roman road network.

This observation suggests that the protection of communications was one of the most important roles of the Mauretanian *limites*, especially in the mountainous regions where banditry was probably commonplace. This accords well with the concept of *limites* as military districts or commands rather than physical barriers. In other words far from enclosing mountains and totally excluding montagnards from the plains these institutions were intended to impose law and

13. Cf. Gsell's commendably cautious comments at AAA 14,8 (Koudiat el Azeri), the ruins of a small town/large village a few kilometres from Tablat: 'cette ressemblance est peut-être fortuite'. He does however also note that the *Notitia* of 484 lists a *episcopus Tablensis* in *Caesariensis*: *Not. prov.* --- 60, 'Quodvultdeus, Tablensis'. The site identified by Piton 1935, 233-234, is more likely to be a villa than a fortlet, despite his interpretation. On the basis of his description, one could restore a linear range, with a tower at either end and a forecourt to the west. Such a plan is commonly depicted on North African mosaics, see Duval 1986. Piton does valuably draw attention to the fact that the mountainous region around Tablat is another of the false blank areas on the archaeological map of Algeria.

14. The anonymous sites include Ain Tissemsilt, Ain Toukria, and Ain Grimidi. *Kherba* of the Ouled Hellal, where the *hiberna alae Sebastenae* was established in 201, doubtless had a more common Berber name.

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order within the mountain ranges and notably to safeguard travellers through those regions.

VI.1.3 Tripolitania

The final region to be studied is the ducate of Tripolitania. The *limites* are tabulated below in a similar manner to that employed for the other two military regions.

Table VI.4

Entry nr.		<i>Limes</i> Command	Location
Occ XXXI 18 = XXV 31?		<i>praep. lim. Talalatensis</i>	Talalati/ Tabalati?
" 19		" <i>Tenthettani</i>	Tentheos
" 20		" <i>Bizerentane</i>	Bezereos
" 21 = " 33		" <i>Tillibarensis</i>	Tillibari
" 22		" <i>Madensis</i>	Ad Amadum?
" 23		" <i>Maccomadensis</i>	Macomades
" 24		" <i>Tintiberitani</i>	(?)
" 25		" <i>Bubensis</i>	(?)
" 26		" <i>Mamucensis</i>	(?)
" 27		" <i>Balensis</i>	(?)
" 28		" <i>Varensis</i>	(?)
" 29		<i>milites Fortenses</i>	Leptis
" 30		<i>in castris Leptitanis</i> <i>milites Munifices</i>	Magna
" 31		<i>in castris Madensibus</i> <i>praep. lim. Sarcitani</i>	Ad Amadum? (?)

Tripolitania has twelve *limites* in addition to the two regiments which are independent of the local frontier command structure. This is the largest number of any of the provinces of the African diocese. It is apparent from the table that the list of *limites* divides into two parts. The first four or five commands line the *Limes Tripolitanus* road, detailed in the Antonine Itinerary. The function and precise route of this road is analysed in section VII.2.1. *Tentheos* (Edref near Zintan?), *Bezereos* or *Vezereos* (Sidi Mohamed ben Aissa, at Bir Rhezan) and *Tillibari* (Remada) are all known to have been military bases in the third century. The *limes Madensis* is a little more doubtful but may represent *Ad Amadum* (Dehibat) on the same road, as suggested by Peyras & Troussel (1988, 197-198). This is the next settlement named in the Antonine Itinerary after *Tillibari*. Alternatively, it is possible that the *limes* was centred on Mizda, a major oasis and crossroads in the upper Wadi Sofeggin, which Mattingly has argued strongly was an important army base during the second-third centuries. Whatever its location *Mada* (?) seems to have been an important military centre in the fourth century since it was not only the headquarters of a *limes*-sector but also housed one of the ducate's two independent regiments. The *limes Talalatensis* has provoked a great deal of tortuous discussion, which is summarised below. Despite the uncertainties, the *limes* is probably to be centred on the site

designated *Tabalati* in the Antonine Itinerary, which lay at Ras el-Ain or Foum Tatahouine, 70-75 km north of Remada.¹⁵

A couple of these commands are probably also listed in the *comes Africae*'s chapter. The *limes secundae [A]f[r]orum in castris Tilliba[r]ensibus* (Occ XXV 33) recurs in the *dux Tripolitanae*'s chapter as the *limes Tillibarensis*, and is clearly centred on *Tillibari* (Remada), the base of the *cohors II Flavia Afrorum equitata*. The possibility that the *limes Tablatensis* (Occ XXV 31) might belong to the Mauretanian command has already been noted. On balance however a Tripolitanian location seems more likely, although considerable confusion surrounds this hypothesis.

The usual identification adopted is that of the 'road station' *Tabalati*, recorded in the *Limes Tripolitanus* Itinerary. This is generally located just to the west of the Jebel Tlalett at Ras el-Ain, where there is a small Gallienic fort which was still in use during the fourth century. Foum Tatahouine, at the southern end of the Jebel Tlalett, has been tentatively suggested as a possible alternative by Euzennat and Troussel (1978, 138), since it accords much better with the distance from *Tillibari* = Remada, recorded by the Itinerary. It may be that name strictly speaking referred to the Jebel Tlalett itself, but thereby could be applied any of the centres in the surrounding district - an early third century road station (Tataouine?), and a mid-third to fourth century fort and *limes* headquarters (Ras el-Ain). When necessary village and fort could be distinguished one from another by functional prefixes, such as *castra*.

In turn, *Tabalati* and the *limes Tablatensis* are equated with the *limes Talalatensis* in the chapter of the *dux Tripolitanae* (ND Occ. XXXI, 18,). Comparison with the Jebel Tlalett lends some conviction to this equation but it is not absolutely secure. Another site on the *limes Tripolitanus* route, *Talalati*, is recorded further east between *Thenadassa* (Ain Wif) and *Vinaza* (El Asabaa) in the Gebel range inland of *Leptis Magna*. Troussel and Euzennat (1978, 138 n.39) regard this as simply a repetition of *Tabalati* interpolated in the wrong position. This may be correct; if the stated distances are observed *Talalati* cannot be fitted into the Gebel road unless it is assumed the road took a lengthy detour. However such a detour is not impossible given the nature of the *iter*, a route composed by linking stretches of several roads leading to many different destinations. Moreover, there is a suitable homonym in the appropriate position between *Thenadassa* (Ain Wif) and *Vinaza* (El Asabaa), at Es-Slahat, which is accepted by Matthews (1976, 183, n.57), Hammond (1967, 14) and *Tabula Imperii Romani* (Goodchild 1954C). For Es-Slahat to be identified with *Talalati*, the Antonine Itinerary distances for the stages *Vinaza-Talalati* (16 miles) and *Talalati-Thenadassa* (m.p. XXVI) would have to be greatly reduced, but the

15. The *iter*, quod limitem Tripolitanum per Turrem Tamalleni a Tacapes Lepti Magna ducit: Itin.Ant. 73.4-6 (heading); --- 74.1-77.3 (way-stations & distances); cf. esp. --- 74.5 (*Bezereos*), --- 76.7 (*Tabalati*), --- 75.5 (*Tillibari*), and --- 76.4 (*Tentheos*).

For the possibility of an early fort at Mizda see Mattingly 1984, 231, 244 & 265, 1985, 72, and 1989, 139.

Itinerary mileages are not so invariably accurate that this argument is at all conclusive. Unfortunately the list of *praepositi limitum* belonging to the Tripolitanian ducate does not maintain a strict order either, so it is not possible to use the *Notitia* chapter as a check.¹⁶

No other *limes* has sustained such a wealth of contradictory argument, nevertheless it is still possible to come to some conclusions, with a degree of confidence.

On balance it would seem perverse to deny the Ras el-Ain/Tatahouine region the status of a *limes*-sector given that Late Imperial military occupation is attested epigraphically at Ras el-Ain - almost uniquely in Tripolitania. Control of movement through the mountain ranges in this area was clearly regarded as being of some importance, as evinced by the series of *clausurae* immediately to the west and north of Ras el-Ain. The fact that it was the *cohors VIII Fida* which was operating in the area from the mid-third century onwards, rather than *cohors II Flavia Afrorum* based at *Tillibari*, would also suggest that it developed as a separate *limes* command and was not simply incorporated in the *limes Tillibarensis*.¹⁷

As to whether the command was named the *limes Talalatensis* or the *limes Tablatensis* more doubt may be sustained, but the presence of the Jebel Tlalett and Oued Tlalett perhaps tilts the evidence in favour of the former hypothesis. If *Alele*, one of the settlements of the *Phazanii* captured by *Balbus* in the first century BC, is identical with *(T)alala(ti)*, as *Cilliba* may well be with *Tillibari*, the identification would be further strengthened.¹⁸

If both the above conclusions are correct the difficult question as to whether there was an exact homonym, lying south-west of *Lepcis*, is relatively unimportant. The *limes Talalatensis* recorded in the chapter of the *dux Tripolitanae* would be centred on Ras el-Ain/Tatahouine whilst the *limes Tablatensis* in the *comes Africae*'s chapter would probably be an inaccurate duplication of the Tripolitanian command, rather than a command based at *Tablat* in *Mauretania Caesariensis*. Only more fieldwork to define the exact line of the road(s) along the Gebel ridge and identify the locations of the roadside villages and towns could resolve this question.

With the addition of *Macomades* (Sirte), on the road running along the coast of the Gulf of Sirte, eastward from *Leptis Magna* towards Cyrenaica, these commands form a group of six with centres which are a familiar part of Tripolitanian topography. In contrast, none of the following six *limites* can be precisely located. One or two can be identified with sites or peoples mentioned in other sources in a way which may shed some light on the group as a whole and enable their

16. *Talalati*: *Itin.Ant.* 76.7; *Vinaza-Thenadassa*: --- 76.6-77.1.

17. 4th century official building inscriptions at Ras el-Ain: *CIL VIII* 22766 + 22767 = *ILAf* 11 (and cf. below Appendix K.3), *CIL VIII* 22768 and cf. *Rebuffat* 1980, 111-112.

18. For *Alele* and *Cilliba* and their possible equation with *Talalati* and *Tillibari* see *Pliny NH V*, v, 35, and Cf. *Euzennat & Troussat* 1978, 152-155 and *Mattingly* 1984, 80, 207 and below.

approximate placing on the map. Mattingly (1984, 86) has pointed out that the *limes Mamucensis* contains the element *..muc..*, which would indicate it fell within the territory of the tribal confederation known as the *Macae*. This grouping, which seems to have been relatively loosely knit, probably inhabited the pre-desert wadis and the Syrtic hinterland of central-eastern Tripolitania.¹⁹

The *limes Balensis* has been identified with one of the names in Pliny's list of peoples and settlements subdued by Cornelius Balbus in 20 BC. The *oppidum* of *Balla* is among the last named sites in Pliny's list, a group which is difficult to pinpoint. It appears distinct from the Numidian examples which are named earlier on such as *Tabudium oppidum* (*Thabudeos?*) or *Thuben oppidum* (*Tubunae?*). Nor is it named amongst the centres of '*Phazania, ubi gentem Phazaniorum urbesque Alelen et Cillibam subegimus, item Cydamum*'. Thus it probably does not lie in western Tripolitania in the territory of the *Phazanii* like (*T*)*alala(ti)*, (*T*)*illiba(ri)* and *Ghadames*. This leaves only the Fezzan, the heartland of the Garamantian kingdom, or the pre-desert valleys of east-central and Syrtic Tripolitania. The Fezzan option would rule out a possible equation between *Balla oppidum* and the *limes Balensis* but the pre-desert alternative would fit nicely alongside the preceding *Notitia* entry, the *limes Mamucensis*.²⁰

Desange's identification of the *limes Bubensis* with another entry in Pliny's list, the *Bubeium natio vel oppidum*, is somewhat more speculative since that 'tribe or town' is sandwiched among the apparently Numidian examples, being preceded by *Milgis Gemella oppidum* (*Gemellae*) and followed by *Enipi natio* (?) then *Thuben oppidum*. A Numidian location would obviously rule out any equation with the *limes Bubensis* of the Tripolitanian ducate, but it is quite conceivable that Balbus' triumphal parade or Pliny's list of the names and images it included, were not grouped with such geographical rigour. At any rate *Bubeium* cannot be identified with any known site in Numidia or any Gaetulian people so Desanges (1957, 23-24, & map) may be correct. This localisation is too tentative in itself to build any theories upon but when considered in conjunction with the *limes Mamucensis* and the *limes Balensis* a site somewhere in the pre-desert wadis south of *Leptis Magna* might be inferred.²¹

In contrast, the road station *Base*, sixty-nine miles from *Leptis Magna* on the Syrtic coastal road, does not seem sufficiently toponymically similar to the *limes Varensis* or the *limes Balensis* to be associated with either of them,

19. Compare the tribal parallels, the *Zamucii*, mentioned alongside the *Muduciuvii*, on IRT 854, a boundary marker of Domitianic date, and the *Samamukii* recorded by Ptolemy in two locations (IV, iii, 6 & IV vi, 6) near the *Cinyphii* and in the interior close to the *Girgiri* mountain. Desanges 1962, 132-133 argues the *Zamucii* and the *Mamucii* are the same tribe but such a direct equation seems unnecessary.

20. For the equation of *Balla* and the *limes Balensis* see Desanges 1957, 32 & map; cf. Pliny NH V, v, 37: *mox oppida continua Baracum, Buluba, Alasit, Galsa, Balla, Maxalla, Cizania; mons Gyri in quo gemmas nasci titulus praecessit*. For the *urbes* of the *Phazanii* see Pliny NH V, v, 35, and above n.18.

21. *Bubeium natio vel oppidum*: Pliny NH V, v, 37.

despite Cagnat (1913, 750) and the interchangeability of B and V.¹²

The remaining *limites* cannot be identified with any site named in other sources. It is likely, though, that like the *limites Bubensis*, *Balensis* and *Mamucensis*, they should be placed in the Tripolitanian pre-desert or perhaps in the Syrtic region, like the better known *limes Maccomadensis*. The ancient toponymy of eastern Tripolitania is very poorly understood, which explains the difficulty in pin-pointing any of these *limites* on the ground. Even the crucial crossroads site at Mizda is shrouded in anonymity. The latter's military importance may well have increased, rather than diminished, with the abandonment of Gheriat el-Garbia. It may represent one of the above, although identification with the *limes* and *castra Madensis* is also a possibility.¹³

The order observed by the Tripolitanian *limites* appears to be roughly geographical - the western frontier districts followed by the eastern ones. This geographical order may be the fortuitous result of the adoption of an order of seniority, based on the date the *limes* was established. The example of the *limes Tentheitanus*, mentioned in the Gasr Duib inscription, suggests the western *limites* had some sort of organisational existence, but no designated *praepositi*, by Philip's reign. It is likely that the second group was formed later, either following the withdrawal from Gheriat el Garbia and Bu Ngem in the 260's or perhaps after Maximian's campaigns at the end of the third century when the incursions of the *Austuriani* had revealed the need for some form of defence in this region. These events may well post-date the information preserved in the Itineraries, which would explain why none of these sites is recorded in those sources. The next batch in this order of seniority is the two regiments of *milites*. It was argued above that they were probably despatched to Tripolitania during the reign of Valentinian. Finally, the *limes Sarcitani*, which follows the two units, may well be a subsequent addition to the network of frontier commands. On this basis it could lie anywhere in the province, but Böcking's emendation to *Sabratani* in an attempt to fix the command around *Sabratha*, is not convincing. The location of *Sarc.* must therefore remain a mystery.¹⁴

VI.1.4 Overall Assessment

It only remains to discuss one issue which concerns all the African chapters of the *Notitia*, namely the overlap between the *comes Africae*'s list and those of the *dux et praeses Mauretaniae Caesariensis* and the *dux Tripolitanae*.

22. Base: *Itin. Ant.* 64.2.

23. Ghirza = Gurza (?) and Bu Ngem = Goliass/Gholaia are virtually the only inland sites in eastern Tripolitania whose names can be inferred from the literary and epigraphic sources. The descriptions of the road along the Syrtic coastline in the Antonine Itinerary (63.3-65.8) and the *Tabula Peutingeria* (Seg. VII, 4-VIII, 2) add some more. The *Peutinger Table* variant may deviate inland via Bu Ngem, if Chosol does indeed equate to Gholaia, cf. Rebuffat 1972-1973C.

24. The *limes Tentheitanus*: IRT 880. For the *milites Fortenses* and *munifices* see above V.2.4.

It is clear that the count's list divides into two sections. The first is very regular and coherent consisting of eight *limites* in Byzacena, Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis, the core of the *comes*' command. The next *limes*, the *limes Balaretanus*, is unidentifiable and so might belong either to the preceding coherent sequence or to the following section. The second group consists of a hotchpotch of *limites* mainly located in Mauretania Caesariensis and Tripolitania. It is highly significant that every *limes* listed in the *comes Africae*'s chapter which can definitely or even probably be located in Caesariensis or Tripolitania is also listed under the disposition of the relevant *dux*. This would suggest that the ducal chapters probably form a comprehensive record of the *limites* situated in Tripolitania and Caesariensis at the time when the *Notitia* was drawn up or last fully revised.

On the basis of the observation above one can conclude of the three unknown *limites* in the count's chapter that they either:

1. Lie in the core area of his command.
2. Represent commands listed in the two ducal chapters in a different form.
3. Were established in Tripolitania or Caesariensis after those chapters were drawn up or last revised, and subsequently fell under the aegis of the *comes*.

In the first case the three *limites* would have had to have been established after the *Notitia* was initially drawn up - with the possible exception of the *limes Balaretanus* - otherwise they would presumably have been included in the initial, coherent section of *Occ XXV*. With regard to the second hypothesis, a *limes* given a geographically indeterminate title such as *Fortensis*, *Augustensis* or *inferioris* in the Mauretanian list could also have been accorded a more precise title specifying the command headquarters. For instance one might envisage a full designation like *praepositus limitis inferioris in castris Tangensibus*, by analogy with the *praepositus limitis secundae [Afr]orum in castris Tillibarensibus* or the *praepositus limitis Montensis in castris [N]eptitanis* (both drawn from the *comes*' chapter). These lengthy versions might be truncated in two ways: *praepositus limitis Montensis* or *praepositus limitis Neptitani*. A shortened version of the *Tillibari* command is actually incorporated in the Tripolitanian chapter in the form *praepositus limitis Tillibarensis*. It is fortunate that the full version is preserved in *Occ XXV*. Alternatively, the *limes* headquarters might simply have been moved from one town to another, for example from *Mutic.* to *Balar.* or vice versa.

The case of the *limes Badensis* may be used as something of a control example since it is the only one of the three *limites* which can be located with any degree of likelihood at all. It has been argued above that it is probably an erroneous repetition of the *limes Bazensis* (*Badias*) recorded higher in the count's list. Thus it neither disturbs the essential unity of the first part of the count's command nor does it

represent a Mauretanian or Tripolitanian *limes* omitted from the chapter of the respective *dux*.

If this is so, the *comes*' chapter may not be such a heterogeneous assemblage as it first appears to be. It is quite possible that the chapter breaks down into two homogenous groups; firstly, the Byzacenian-Numidian-Sitifensian core, and secondly, the *limites* 'annexed' by the *comes* at the expense of the two neighbouring *duces*. Within such a framework the *limes Balaretanus* might possibly belong to the first group and lie in Mauretania Sitifensis, along with the *limites Zabensis*, *Tubusubditani* and *Thamallomensis*.²⁵ If the *limes Badensis* is simply an error that would leave only the *limes Ta(u/n)gensis*, which might represent an alternative title for one of the Mauretanian commands. The schematic outline in this paragraph is only intended as an example, other variants are possible within this overall framework but the essential point is that the chapters of the *Notitia* are intelligible and may be rather more consistent than first appearances would suggest.

The duplication of entries implies that the African chapters cannot be absolutely contemporary. Of the three it seems likely that *Occ XXV* would have undergone the latest revision. The count's chapter was undoubtedly the most important and initially had field army troops listed within it. Those *comitatenses* were definitely subject to continued alteration for a significant period after the document was drawn up.

The picture of gradual encroachment upon the two neighbouring lesser commands, revealed by *Occ XXV*, is entirely credible in the historical context of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. It is exactly the type of behaviour which might be anticipated of the very powerful figures, Gildo, Heraclian and Boniface, who held the post of *comes* during this period. The two ducates probably originated during Gildo's tenure of the African command. They are certainly not encountered any earlier. But Gildo managed to secure for himself the more senior rank of *magister militum*, which does not feature in the *Notitia*. It is therefore likely that the final arrangement of three commands - *dux*, *comes* and *dux* - reflects a reorganisation undertaken by Stilicho after Gildo's suppression. Thereafter, successive *comites* may have gradually extended their authority at the expense of the two neighbouring commands. The stationing of field army units in the ducal provinces is one possible mechanism whereby this might have been achieved, and would help to explain the piecemeal fashion in which it appears to have been done. If *comitatenses* were billeted in one of the *limites* their commander, who would be a subordinate of the *comes Africae*, might have been appointed *praepositus* of that particular *limes* for the duration of the regiment's stay. The ostensible purpose would have been improved coordination between the frontier and field army troops and the elimination of conflicts of jurisdiction, but once the military district had

25. Four *limites* in one province is conceivable though it probably represents the maximum that would be required in a province as small as Sitifensis.



Tubunae

(after Baradez 1949)



Gemellae; Fort and Town

(after Baradez 1949)

fallen into the count's grasp it would be difficult to prise it away from him, even if the unit moved on after a time.²⁶

Thus, a straightforward one-way process may be envisaged. The initial draft would reflect the situation in 399. The authority of the *comes* was probably restricted to the frontier troops in the central provinces and the regional *comitatenses*, whilst the *duces* of Tripolitania and Mauretania Caesariensis were entrusted with all the *limites* in their respective provinces. The *comes*' subsequent interference in the neighbouring commands can be charted in *Occ XXV* but not in the less important ducal chapters which were perhaps never updated. Finally, the count's section itself ceased to be revised at an indeterminate date in the early fifth century.

Conclusion

The *Notitia* gives a broad framework within which to work. The headquarters of many military districts can be pinpointed, and some conclusions reached regarding the role of those *limites*. However, many others cannot be identified, and in any case the three chapters give no clue as to the precise location of the frontier garrisons and their associated infrastructure within each military district. Moreover, the *Notitia* shows the military structure of Late Roman Africa in its later phase, at the beginning of the fifth century. To understand fully the internal organisation of the *limites* and the development of the frontier in the late third and fourth centuries it is necessary to turn to the archaeological record.

VI.2 SITE HIERARCHY: I, *LIMES* HEADQUARTERS

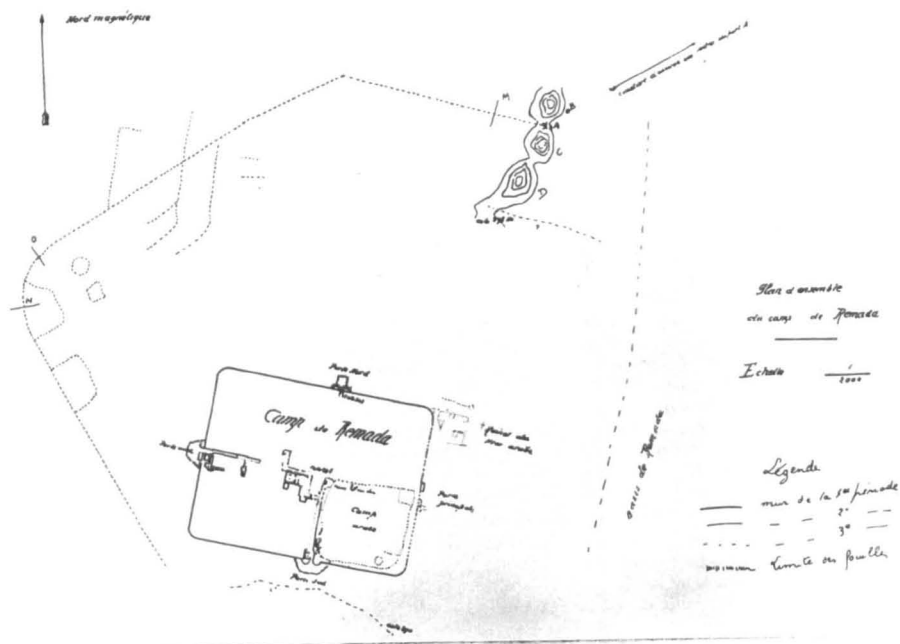
It would be characteristic of a system of territorial commands, such as that recorded by the *Notitia*, for the military posts within a given area to form a definite site hierarchy dependent on the headquarters at the centre of the command. This section will attempt to show how this is reflected in the archaeological record.

VI.2.1 Location and Classification

The most important sites, those which formed the headquarters and principal base of each *limes*, are perhaps the most enigmatic elements of the region's Late Roman military infrastructure. Those which can be identified fall into two main categories.

The first group consists of those derived from regimental or legionary detachment forts established during the Principate. These are particularly common in Tripolitania and Numidia,

26. There is no mention of the *duces* in Tripolitania or Caesariensis before *CTH XII i 133* (393), addressed to Silvanus, *dux et corrector limitis Tripolitani*: see Chastagnol 1967, 128 & 131, Hoffmann 1968, 241-242 and 1974B, 391-392, Mann 1977, 12, and Donaldson 1985, 176. The *Notitia* itself forms the only evidence for the presence of a *dux* in Caesariensis, see below VII.5.4; cf. also V.3.2.



Remada - Tillibari

(after Troussset 1974)



Ras el-Ain - East Gate

notable examples being *Gemellae*, *Tillibari*, *Bezereos* and probably *Tentheos* and *Talalati*. In the second category are the *limes*-centres which were located in cities, such as *Turris Tammaleni* in Tripolitania or *Badias* and *Tubunae* in Numidia. The latter type was most common in the two Mauretaniae.²⁷

In fact there may have been considerable overlap between the two groups. Many urban *limes* headquarters may actually have been located in a fort, as yet undiscovered, inside or beside the city, perhaps a survivor from the second or third centuries. Indeed *Gemellae* is an example of just such a case, the Hadrianic fort being surrounded by a town which eventually gained the status of a *municipium*. There is no guarantee that *Badias*, which is poorly known, or *Tubunae*, where later occupation may have destroyed earlier traces, were not similar with a continuous military presence from Trajan through to the Late Empire. Certainly, Trajanic or Hadrianic forts were established at both these pre-existing native centres. Military occupation may well have continued without a break through to the fourth century. In Mauretania Caesariensis, *Auzia*, probably *Columnata* and perhaps even *Bida*, may represent similar instances. In other cases however the army may well have taken over a quarter of a town, as occurred at *Dura Europus* and *Palmyra* on the Eastern frontier in the third century. There is an especially strong likelihood of this occurring when a command was established in a district in the interior previously devoid of military infrastructure.²⁸

These comments make the assumption that the site named in the title of each *praepositus limitis* formed his headquarters. This is not absolutely certain. It may be that it only represents the most sizeable place in the district for which

27. Fortification work on city walls is not considered in any detail in this study, though it may have some relevance to the location of *limes* headquarters and for field army deployment. For an overview of urban fortification in ancient North Africa see Daniels 1983; and now Rebuffat 1988 (suggesting a major Diocletianic building programme). The lists in Duval 1946, 19 n.2, Courtois 1955, 121-123 and Lawless 1970 I, 193-194 are also useful. For Roman urban defences in general see Fevrier 1969 and Rebuffat 1974B. Examples attested by epigraphy include the rebuilding of the *municipium Rapidense* by the governor Ulpus Apollonius between 293-305, *CIL* VIII 20836 = *ILS* 638; the dedication of new gates and towers at Tipasa in 305-307, *AE* 1966, 600; the construction of *murum et porta nova et turres* at Altava in 349, *AE* 1935, 86; and the *nova moenia* built at El Hadjeb near Mouzaia in accordance with the *iussa cuncta comitum*, *CIL* VIII 9282. The *portas ac valvas factas* at Kherba of the Aouisset in 346 may also derive from a small urban site; cf. *AE* 1955, 139, and Appendix K.2.

28. For *Auzia* see section VII.5.1; for *Bida* see VII.5.2. For *Columnata* (Ain Zerla, 1-2 km south of Sidi Hosni = ex Waldeck Rousseau): AAA 22,127 add & 33,15, Gsell 1928, 25, Albertini 1928, 34-35, Cadenat 1953, 167-168 (building dedication by a *magister*), 1957, 90-97, 1953B, 286-287 (*fenestella confessionis*), 1958, (excavation of bathhouse), 1972, 30 & 33-34 (watchtower south of *Columnata* = AAA 33,15), 1979, 250-254 (Late Antique capitals), 1988, 49-55, Lawless 1970 II, 125-131 nr.47, Salama 1973, 348 nr.59. The civil settlement was clearly quite important, and may have attained the status of *civitas*. That the *limes* listed by the *Notitia* may have originated out of much earlier military dispositions, is suggested by *AE* 1912, 173 = Fabre (*BSGAO*) 1912, 127 (road works in the area under Caracalla) and *CIL* VIII 22587 (a milestone of Macrinus discovered at Ain Ouaba - AAA 23,14 - marking the distance a *Columnata m(ilia) p(assuum)* XV, corresponding with that to Ain Zerla). The site was clearly the administrative hub in this section of the frontier zone and this would imply a garrison fort, see Salama 1953 & 1955, 1973, 1979. Military activity is recorded during Diocletian's reign, when a victory dedication was set up at *Columnata* by Aurelius Litua (*AE* 1912, 24, cf. *CIL* VIII 9324 and see above VII.2.3). The *limes* may owe its foundation to these events.

LATE ROMAN FORTS/FORTLETS IN N. AFRICA

A - Zebaret et Tir

B - Tamuda (Tingitana)

C - Bourada

D - Aqua Viva

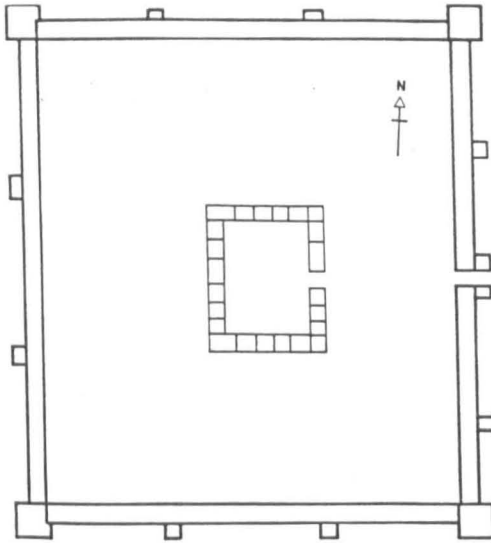
E - Gasr Bularkan

F - Benia bel-Recheb

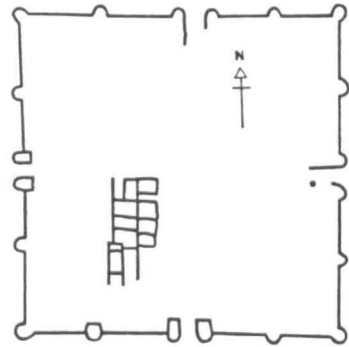
G - 'Castellum Schneider', Doucen

H - Aquae Herculis

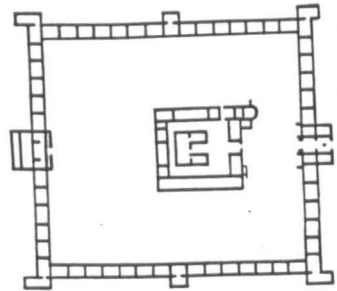
I - Fort Parallelogramme (dimensions/proportions suspect - App.F)



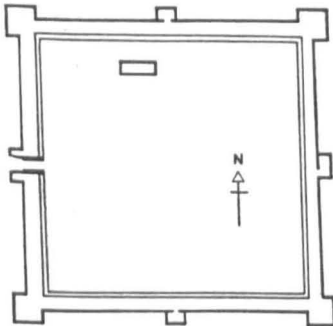
A



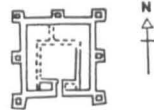
B



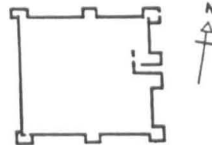
C



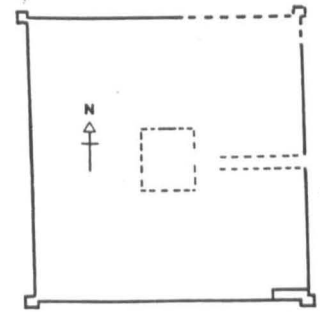
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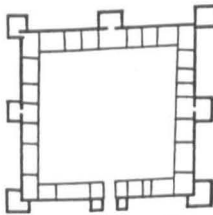
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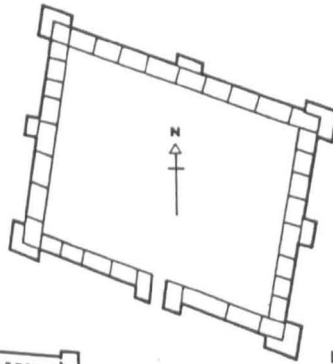
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G



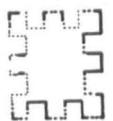
H



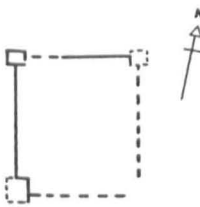
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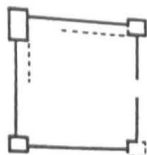
J



K



L



M



J - Hr. Temassine

K - Hr. Rijila

L - Zavia et-Tailmun (Cyrenaica)

M - El Benia (")

(after Daniels 1987)

the *praepositus* was responsible. A city may have given its name to a command whilst the *praepositus* was actually esconced in a fort elsewhere. The large fort of Zebaret et Tir would be a candidate for such a role. One particular command, the *limes Gemellensis*, may be used as an example. The fort at *Gemellae* does not exhibit any epigraphy or other diagnostic traces of refurbishment, such as projecting towers or barracks set against the curtain wall, which would demonstrate Late Imperial occupation. On the other hand, some of the new *centenaria* which can plausibly be allocated to the *limes* do contain buildings which might imply a command function, notably the basilica in the eastern fort at Drah Souid and the courtyard building at Bourada. Indeed central courtyard buildings can be found in many late African forts.

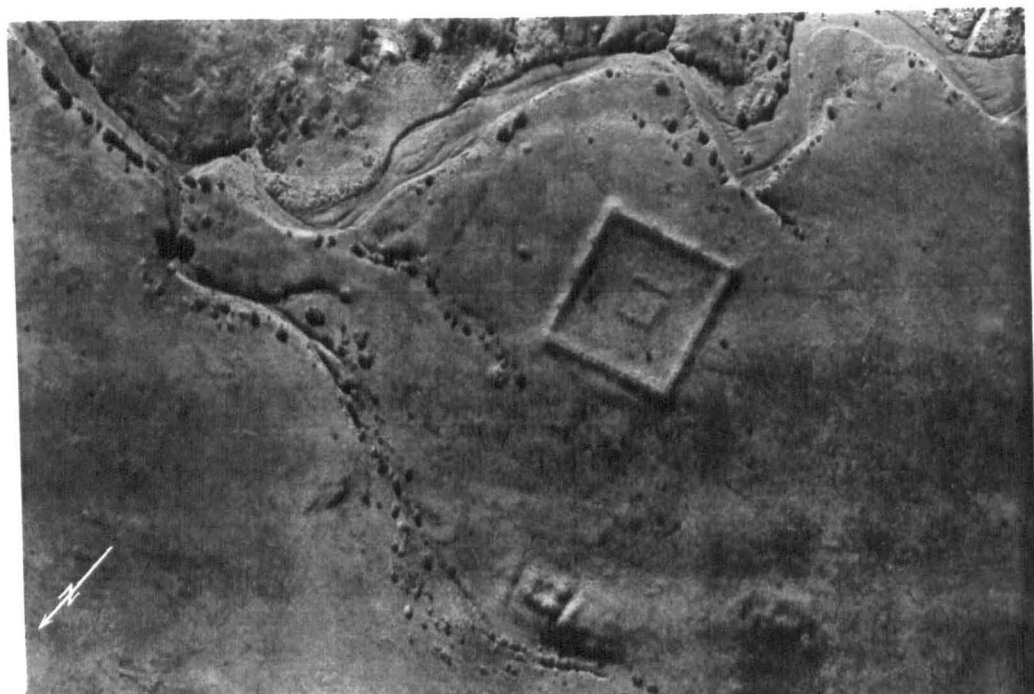
On balance these objections do not seem decisive. The most important towns in a given area would usually lie at the hub of the local road network, a vital consideration for any military base. As was the case at *Gemellae*, the defences of Ras el-Ain in Tripolitania similarly show no indication of Late Imperial modernisation, but epigraphic evidence makes it abundantly clear that the site was still in military use and was kept in good repair during the fourth century. Clearly, it was not felt necessary to upgrade the defences of the larger, older bases. This may have been particularly so when, as in the case of *Gemellae*, the fort was enclosed within a walled *municipium*, itself equipped with projecting towers. Furthermore, the care taken in at least two instances to specify the name of the command centre when the *limes'* title omitted it, suggests that when this was not done - the vast majority of cases - the named location represented the headquarters. Finally, an alternative explanation is available for the internal buildings of the *Gemellae* sector forts, as set out in section VI.4.3.²⁹

VI.3 SITE HIERARCHY: II, THE FORTS AND FORTLETS

Ranking below the headquarters centres are the smaller forts and fortlets where Late Imperial occupation can be demonstrated. Many were newly built during the period. They are particularly useful elements of the military site hierarchy since they show where troops were actually stationed within each *limes* and it is on the relationship between these sites and the main bases that the remainder of this section will focus.

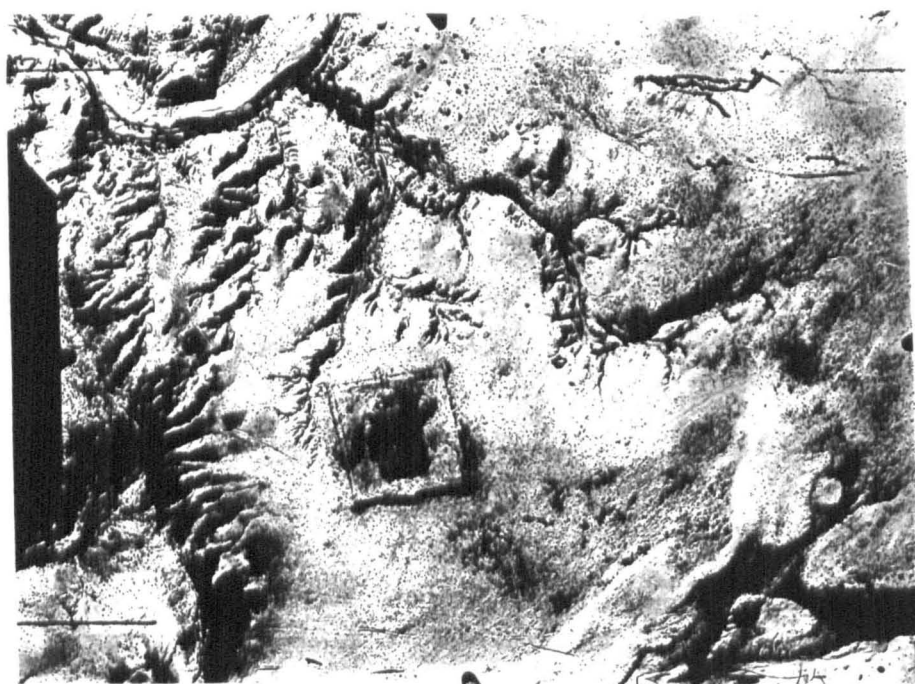
29. The two examples where the command centre is specified are the *praepositus limitis Montensis in castris [N]eptitanis* (ND Occ. XXV 22) and the *praepositus limitis secundae [A]f[ro]rum in castris Tilliba[r]ensibus* (ND Occ. XXV 33) both listed under the *comes Africae*. The second entry incidentally confirms that the *praepositus limitis Tillibarensis* in the Tripolitanian chapter was indeed based at Remada. Equally the fact that the *milites munifices* were stationed in *castris Madensibus* (ND Occ. XXXI 30) suggests the *praepositus limitis Madensis* (ND Occ. XXXI 22) was also based there. In contrast no attempt is made to specify the headquarters of the *praepositus limitis inferioris* (ND Occ. XXX 14) in the chapter of the *dux et praeses Mauretaniae Caesariensis* and the same is true of the suspiciously ornately titled *praepositus limitis Fortensis* (ND Occ. XXX 15) and *praepositus limitis Augustensis* (ND Occ. XXX 19).

NUMIDIAN FORTS: AERIAL VIEWS



Zebaret et Tir

(after Baradez 1949)



Aqua Viva

(after Leschi 1941=1957)

VI.3.1 *Typology*

The Numidian Forts

There is considerable homogeneity about the newly built forts of the *limites Gemellensis* and *Tubuniensis*. Those located along, or to the west of, the two barriers tend to be roughly square in plan, with their curtain wall faces ranging around 80 m and areas of roughly 0.65-0.75 hectares. In contrast the forts situated on the road network in the rugged hinterland behind the *fossatum* are much smaller (between 0.12-0.27 hectares), for example Hammam Sidi el Hadj (*Aquae Herculis*) and Loth Bordj. All feature angle and interval towers, single gateways flanked by twin gate-towers, rooms set against the inner face of the enceinte, and often a central (courtyard?) building, presumably for administration, storage and housing the officer in charge. There may be other ranges of buildings in the interior of the forts, as argued by Baradez in the case of the Fort Parallelogramme at Seba Mgata, for example. These are far more difficult to spot on the air photos, but this may be because they were built of mud brick alone rather than mud brick on stone footings. The ranges set against the curtain wall were presumably used to provide barrack and stabling accommodation and storage capacity. The ranges may have been two-storey but so far the evidence on this point is inconclusive as regards fourth century North African forts, though it is a well attested feature of contemporary military sites elsewhere in the Empire (see below VI.6.1).³⁰

The group contains two anomalous sites. One is Zebaret et Tir. It differs from the pattern outlined above in only one respect, its size. With dimensions of 154 x 142 m it covers 2.19 hectares. This puts it on a par with the larger forts of the Principate and makes it unique amongst the Late Roman fortifications of the region.

A second site requiring comment is the Fort Parallelogramme at Seba Mgata. The ground plan of this site takes the form of a parallel-sided quadrilateral. Baradez records the dimensions of Seba Mgata as 84 x 60 m (1949, 244) although examination of his vertical air photographs casts some doubt on the accuracy of these measurements. Perhaps the text should have read 84 x 80 m or 64 x 60 m, which would give the fort proportions very like those of other Late Roman forts in

30. For discussion of the group as a whole see Daniels 1987, 260 & 262-263 esp. fig.10.19 and Fentress 1979, 105-108.

Courtyard buildings are known in the centre of Bourada and Zebaret et Tir, and a basilica in Drah Souid East. Indeterminate central structures are recorded at the following forts: Esdeit, Drah Souid West (Guey 1939, 191: 'Au centre, éminence'), Doucen, Mesarfelta 'castrum', Fort Parallelogramme, the Daya 'castellum', Loth Bordj (probably an earlier watchtower) and 'Castrum du Confluent (perhaps the *principia* of the original fort). The courtyard of Aqua Viva contains a small building in the northern half, whilst, on the air photograph, the centre is occupied by a large, dark, roughly rectangular area - a *principia*? *Aquae Herculis*, a somewhat smaller site, lacks any central structure.

I cannot see any internal buildings at Fort Parallelogramme (other than the ranges set against the curtain wall) on Baradez' air photo, but cf. Baradez 1949, 11, 244 & 247; the olive press: Baradez 1949, 204 (pl.C) & 247.

LATE FORTLETS IN TRIPOLITANIA



Benia Guedah Ceder

(after Troussel 1974)



Benia bel Recheb

(after Troussel 1974)



Henchir Rjijila

(after Troussel 1974)

Numidia, such as *Aqua Viva*, Bourada, Doucen and Zebaret et Tir.³¹

The rhomboidal form of Seba Mgata is not without parallel. Fentress (1979, 106-108) was inclined to include it amongst the supposed Valentinianic series of trapezoidal forts which she believed could be identified in North Africa but the validity of this group is refuted in Appendix F. In any case there are no convincing grounds for including Fort Parallelogramme, with its rhomboidal ground plan, amongst a collection of trapezoidal sites. It would be preferable to compare Seba Mgata with Yverdon and Burg bei Stein (*Taesgaetium*) in modern Switzerland.³² These sites are not a distinct group designed to achieve specific advantages in terms of defensive tactics. They are a sub-group of the square/nearly square forts, a sub-group produced by defective Roman surveying. They might be most appropriately entitled the 'bent *groma*' sites! In other words Fort Parallelogramme has a deformed, nearly square plan. It is probably of a similar size to Numidian *centenaria* such as *Aqua Viva* or Bourada and should be considered as just another example of that numerous class.

Tripolitania

This overall picture contrasts with that presented by the new Tripolitanian forts, which were far smaller than their Numidian counterparts. Mattingly's table (1984, 268, table 7b) shows that even the largest, Ksar Tabria, was no more than 0.36 hectares in area (60 x 60 m). Moreover, that exceeds any other members of the group by a considerable margin, so Mattingly (1984, 270) may be correct in suggesting Tabria was an earlier fort reoccupied in the Late Empire; the next largest, Sdada and Benia Guedah Ceder, only covered 0.27 and 0.24 hectares respectively. These alone are comparable in size with the late forts of the *limites Gemellensis* and *Tubuniensis*. The remainder range from 0.16 and 0.15 hectares, in the cases of Benia bel Recheb and Henchir el Hadjar, to a mere 0.05 h and 0.04 hectares for the diminutive Gasr Bularkan and Henchir Rjijila.³³

In plan, however, the Tripolitanian sites share many of the features of the Numidian forts, notably single gateways and projecting, usually rectangular, towers. Where internal buildings survive the characteristic ranges set against the

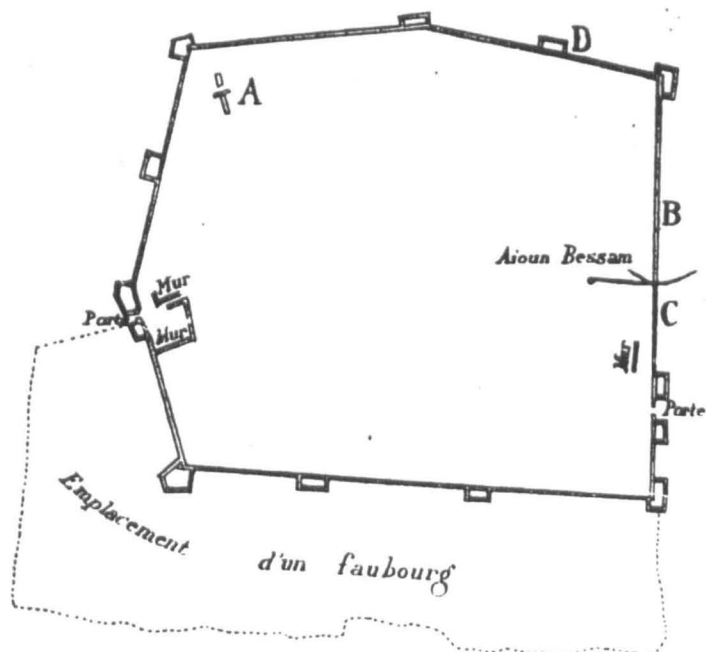
31. The north-west and south-east faces of Fort Parallelogramme appear only marginally shorter than its north-east and south-west faces. Even allowing for possible distortion it is difficult to accept that the difference between the 'long' and 'short' faces was as great as Baradez claimed. The discrepancy may be due to a simple typographical error on the part of Baradez or his publishers.

32. *Taesgaetium* and Yverdon: Schonberger 1969, 179, 185, Von Petrikovits 1971, 181, 185, 195 (*Taesgaetium* = nr.2.80/7.80), Drack 1980, 44-46, Johnson 1983, 162-165. Indeed such sites occur at all periods of Roman Imperial fort/marching camp construction, cf. for example the legionary fortress at Carnuntum.

33. Later Roman forts in Tripolitania: Mattingly 1984, 268-272, Goodchild 1950 = 1976, 38-41, Troussset 1974, 53 (Hr. Temassine), 59-60 (Hr. el Hadjar), 67-68 (Benia Guedah Ceder), 73-75 (Ksar Tabria), 95-96 (Benia bel Recheb), 105-106 (Hr. Rjijila), 133-135 (discussion), and add Henchir Chenah at the eastern end of the Chareb (Troussset 1978, 134,), Henchir Kedama (Feuille 1938-1940, 260-261) and Chawan (Rebuffat 1972, 323).

(after Fort 1908A)

A. *Forme conservée* C. Lieu de l'Inscription C.I.L. 9182
B. *Forme probable* D. *id.* *id.* 9181



Echelle de 0.0025 p. 6 mètres

(after Masqueray 1882–1883)

inner face of the enceinte have been recorded. Tabria contains a central structure, whilst Benia Guedah Ceder incorporates a courtyard building set back against the north-west wall of the circuit.³⁴

Mauretania

The evidence from Mauretania Caesariensis and Sitifensis is less clear. The structural evidence for Late Imperial military architecture in these two provinces has never properly been collated. The preference for round towers rather than the rectangular variety favoured further east is noteworthy. These are recorded at *Ala Miliaria*, *Cohors Breucorum*, the tiny post of Ain Grega (just south of Aïoun Sbiba), Ain Grimidi, Aras and Ferme Romanette. The reliability of some of these records is not beyond doubt. La Blanchère's plan of *Cohors Breucorum*, for example, is very odd. The dimensions are appropriate to a cohort fort of the Principate, which it was in origin. It has a circular tower at each angle but those at the north-east and south-east corners are both combined with a D shaped tower to form two gateways sited at either end of the east face of the fort. At 15 m square (0.023 hectares), Ain Grega is so small that it may simply represent a rather elaborate civilian *gasr* with circular angle turrets in addition to the basic form. Fan-shaped angle towers, characteristic of modernised forts on the Danubian and Eastern frontiers, have been reported at the Antonine outpost fortlet of Medjedel. Rectangular towers are not absent however. They are a feature of the large fort near Ain Bessem north-east of *Auzia*, the small (95 x 45 m) citadel or fort at the core of Tiaret, and the fortlet of Ain Sidi Taieb just west of Ain Grimidi.³⁵

34. Ksar Tabria alone has circular angle and D-shaped gate towers: Troussel 1974, 73-75 and Mattingly 1984, 270.

Ranges set against the curtain wall survive at *Gasr Bularkan* and *Sdada* and were recorded at Benia bel Recheb and Benia Guedah Ceder but have since been robbed out. *Sdada* also features a barrack like range in the courtyard. The internal arrangements are discussed by Mattingly 1984, 269-272 with plan of the group on p.555, fig.28.

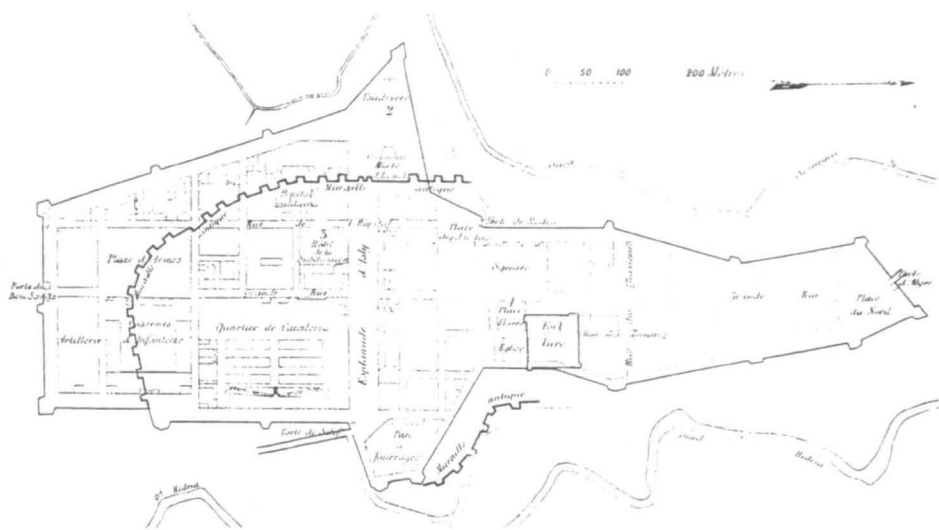
For the central structure at Ksar Tabria: Troussel 1974, 74; The courtyard building at Benia Guedah Ceder: Troussel 1974, 68. Both are labelled *reduits*. The interpretation of central structures within Roman fortifications on the North African *limes* as 'redoubts' was a common and dubious feature of earlier French studies, and still makes its way into modern literature. Such '*reduits*' can generally be interpreted as headquarters buildings.

Where reduction can actually be shown to have taken place, at sites outside Africa such as *Capidava* on the Lower Danube or *Eining* in *Raetia*, the new fortification tends to occupy one corner of the site, the remainder being abandoned. For *Capidava* cf. Crow 1981, 99 & fig 1.1 (& cf. 102-103). *Eining-Abusina*: Baatz 1975, 274.

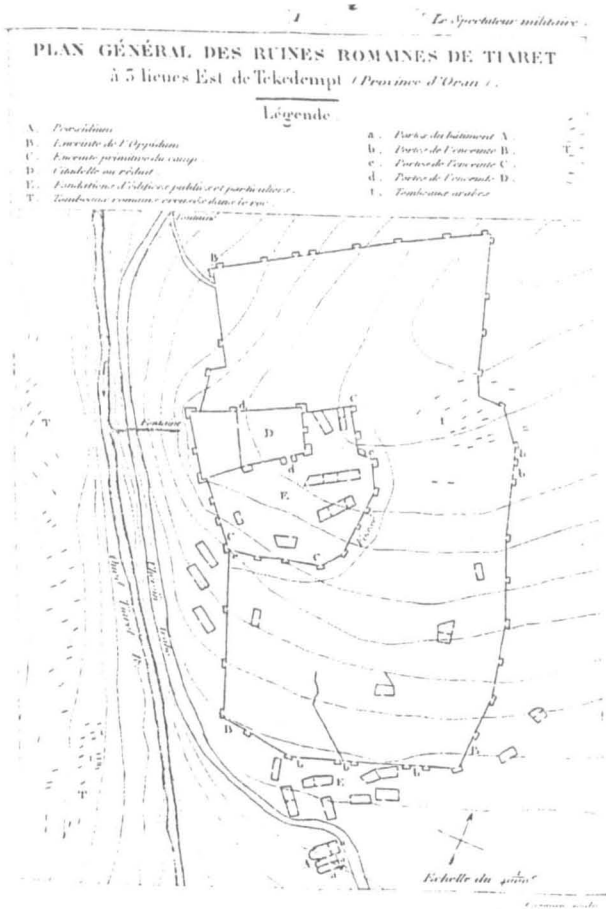
For discussion of East Roman military activity in this area see Appendix A.3.1. It has been argued that some of the small forts were built during the 6th century (cf. Troussel 1985A, 375), but on balance a late 3rd-5th century date is preferable, though Byzantine reoccupation cannot be ruled out.

35. In general see Salama 1984, 130 & 135; for individual sites:--
Ala Miliaria (Benian): AAA 32,93, La Blanchère 1883, 67 & pl.V, Gsell 1899, 8-9 (fig.2), and 1901 I, 87-88 (fig.26), Lawless 1970 II, 104-106, Lenoir (M.) 1986. *Ain Grega*: AAA 33,36 add, Fort 1908A, 26 & pl. V.1, and 1908B, 273, Lawless 1970 II, 158. *Ain Grimidi*: AAA 24,155 & add, Desrayaux 1911, 475-477 & 482. *Aras* (Tarmount): AAA 25,10, Christoffe 1938, 276-285. *Ferme Romanette*: AAA 34,57, Joly 1898, cf. Benseddik 1980, 981-983 & 985-987 esp. fig. 66.1, and 1982, 176 & esp. fig.33. *Cohors Breucorum* (Henchir Souik): AAA 33,23 & add, La Blanchère 1883, 69-70 & esp. pl.VII fig. 1, Lawless 1970 II, 148-152. Judging from the dotted

MAURETANIAN TOWN DEFENCES



Auzia (after Gsell AAA 14,105)



Tiaret (after Azema de Montgravier 1843)

The lack of excavation or published air photography hampers our understanding of the internal arrangements of the forts. There is no evidence that the ranges of rooms set against the enceinte, which are such a pronounced feature of Later Roman castramentation in Numidia and Tripolitania, are also to be found in the Mauretanas, except in the case of Ain Grega which is perhaps too small to be relevant. Bearing in mind the ease with which similar structures have been robbed out at Benia bel Recheb and Benia Guedah Ceder in Tripolitania this absence may not be significant. At Ferme Romanette something resembling a traditional free-standing barrack block is marked on Joly's plan (published by Benseddik - 1980, 1982 and 1982), but again the veracity of this record would require confirmation by modern survey or excavation.

Furthermore, little can be deduced from the meagre epigraphic sources regarding the deployment of the regiments, apart from the continued presence of the *numerus Syrorum* at Lalla Maghnia (see II.1.1). Milestones which continue to record the distance a *Coh(ors) Breuc(orum)* in the late third century mark the distance to the site, not necessarily the unit. Striking evidence of the changes which may have taken place in these 'military' centres, during the course of the third century, is furnished by the example of *Ala Miliaria*. There, a dedication was made in honour of Diocletian and his three colleagues by one Atius Crescens, *ob hono]rem IIvi(ratus) Al(ae) M(iliariae)*. The settlement around the fort had obviously acceded to the rank of *municipium* or *colonia* during the previous hundred years. *Altava*, further west was already a *civitas* by 220/230.³⁶

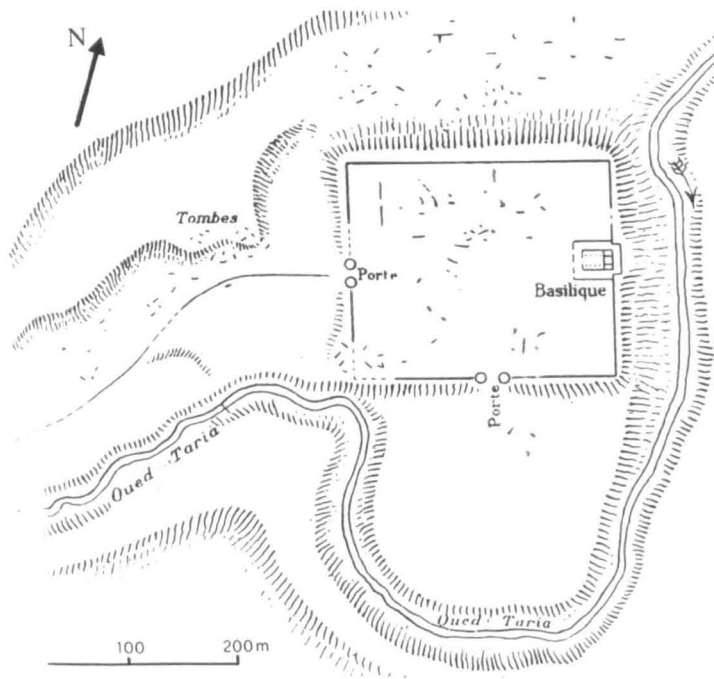
Nevertheless, despite its rise in civic status, it appears that *Ala Miliaria* had not yet had farewell to its homonymous regiment. A recent study by M. Lenoir (1986) has persuasively argued that the fifth century Donatist basilica situated at the east end of the walled site was not built *de novo* but in fact was constructed from the remains of a second phase *principia* of the fort. After comparing it with other known third/fourth century *principia*, Lenoir favours a date in the third quarter of the third century for its construction, which must have formed part of a fundamental reorganisation of the fort's internal arrangements. A somewhat later date might be preferable. Lenoir's argument that the *Ala Miliaria* basilica

lines employed by La Blanchère to denote the D shaped towers these were less certain on the ground than the angle towers. For the fan-shaped angle towers at Medjedel see Salama 1991, 95-97.

Ain Bessem: AAA 14,28, Caussade 1851, 242-243, Masqueray 1882-1883, 225-232 & plan, Cardaillac 1890, 165 & plan, Robert 1903, (plan), Cagnat 1913, 637-638, and see VII.5.1 for location. Tiaret: AAA 33,14, Azéma de Montgravier 1843, 665-667, 675 & plan, Fabre 1900, (with plan), Cagnat 1913, 660-661, Lawless 1970 II, 143-147. Ain Sidi Taieb: cf. AAA 24,155 add, Desrayaux 1911, 483.

36. Late 3rd century milestones: *CIL VIII* 22598 (AD 270), and *CIL VIII* 22599 (AD 282-283). The *IIvir Alae Miliariae*: AE 1936, 64 = Leschi 1936, 110-111. Cf. Gascon 1982, 244-245 and Lepelley 1981, 520-521. For the *civitas Altavensium* see *CIL VIII* 21723 = AE 1889, 150 = Marcillet-Jaubert 1968, 24, nr.8, dedication to Elagabalus in 220, by the *ordo et vet(erani et) populares Alt(avensium)*. This reading is the result of a revision of the text by Pflaum, followed by Marcillet-Jaubert. Cf. Pouthier 1956, Marcillet-Jaubert 1968, 122, 273 & 317, Lawless 1970, II, 51-65, and Lepelley 1981, 522-534. Cf. Mahboubi 1977-1979 = AE 1985, 976: (imperial dedication) *possessores Altavenses ex sua collatione templum fecerunt*, in AD 221.

ALA MILIARIA



The Fort - later Town - Circuit

(after Gsell 1901A)

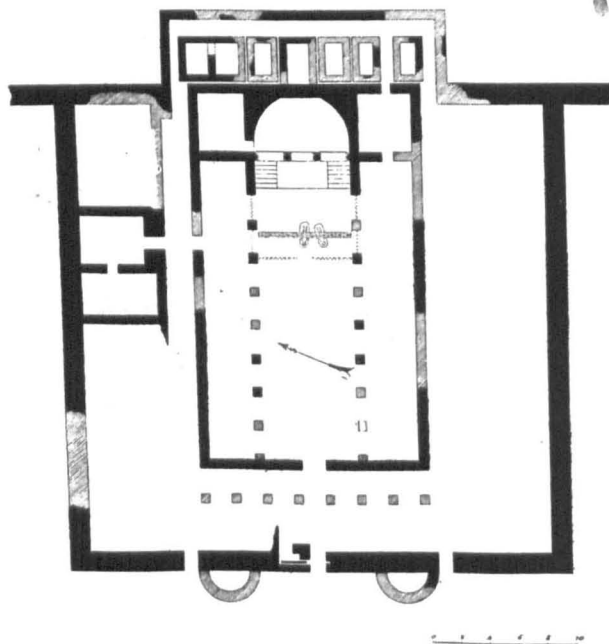


FIG. 117. — Basilique de Bénian.

The Basilica (remodelled Late Principia?) (after Gsell 1901A)

forms a stage halfway between the basilica with adjacent courtyard type of headquarters, represented for example by the Severan phase at *Thamusida*, and free-standing or axial street basilica represented by *Drah Souid-East* (on the *Gemellae fossatum*) and *Drobeta*, and *Dionysias* respectively is unconvincing. The relocated headquarters must have lain at the very end of an axial street running the entire length of the fort. The parallels for this are late third century or early fourth century in date, for example *Dionysias* (Qasr Qarun) in Egypt (AD 306), and *Iatrus* on the Lower Danube. It appears that the *principia* was actually located on the site of the former east gateway, which had perhaps been rendered redundant by the action of the Oued Traria. Indeed it may be possible to detect one or two traces of the former gate-towers on the plan published by Gsell (1899, 19, fig.5 and 1901, 176, fig.117). Its subsequent conversion into a Donatist church, housing the relics of the martyr Robba and several colleagues, may account for some of the differences which are visible. Lenoir himself is justifiably cautious in assessing just what the precise form of the original military structure was, and which elements are to be attributed to the fifth century rebuilding.

Such a major reconstruction indicates the army had no intention of leaving *Ala Miliaria*. Nor does the *municipium* or *colonia* feel the need to build defences of its own to complement those of the fort. The only circuit at Benian is quite plainly that of the fort, itself measuring 235m x 195m. Evidently the presence of the troops was sufficient defence, and was expected to remain so. *Ala Miliaria* is not the only site where the fort circuit is the only one apparent, *Cohors Breucorum* and *Kaputtasaccura* also fall into this category. In contrast at Kherba des Ouled Hellal the *hiberna* of the *ala Pia Gemina Sebastena* was surrounded by a town itself protected by a circuit wall (the same is of course also true of *Gemellae* and *Ad Maiores* in Numidia and Bu Ngem in Tripolitania). At *Numerus Syrorum*, *Pomaria* and Ain Toukria there is no trace of the Severan forts, only large defensive urban circuits have been identified. Likewise, an urban enceinte can be traced on air photos of *Altava*, and has been partially excavated, but a smaller (120 x 70 m) enclosure can also be discerned in the south-west corner of the town. This is probably the *castrum* built (or restored ?) by the agents of king Masuna in 508.³⁷

37. *Kaputtasaccura*: AAA 31,76, Berbrugger & Cape A. 1857-1858, 87, Lawless 1970 II, 75; Kherba des Ouled Hellal: AAA 23,35, Lt B. & MacCarthy 1857-1858, Salama 1953, 255-256, and 1973, 347 nr.1, Lawless 1970 II, 180-181.

Numerus Syrorum: AAA 41,1, Azéma de Montgravier 1841-1847, 335, Callier & Letronne 1844, 182, Cagnat 1913, 628, Salama 1966-1967, 216, Lawless 1970 II, 24-30; *Pomaria* (Tlemcen): AAA 31,56, Canal 1889 (esp. plans facing pp.272 & 320); Lawless 1970 II, 48-49 & fig.10, Dahmani 1983 (1985), 439-441 (esp. figs.1-2); Ain Toukria: AAA 23,27, Gavault 1883, 232, Lawless 1970 II, 171-174, Salama 1973, 347 nr.37.

Two conflicting versions of the defended enclosure at *Numerus Syrorum* are cited by Gsell in the Atlas - a rectangular circuit 400 x 250 m (Azéma de Montgravier), and a triangular area 250 x 225 m (!? Callier & Letronne) - the former being generally preferred. Azéma de Montgravier notes the enceinte featured numerous, projecting rectangular towers, spaced at 10 m intervals. This feature recurs on the urban defences at Auzia, and is somewhat similar to those recorded at Tiaret, but none of these circuits can be dated, unfortunately.

This is a very disparate assemblage of sites. Many were modernised third century posts, notably *Ala Miliaria*, *Cohors Breucorum*, *Aras*, and *Ain Grimidi*. *Medjedel* was even older, an Antonine creation. The extent to which projecting towers were added to earlier forts in *Caesariensis* stands in marked contrast to the situation in *Tripolitania* and *Numidia*, where only the *Castrum du Confluent* and perhaps *Ksar Tabria* are comparable. Some of the larger sites named above may well be *limes* headquarters, their identity masked in the *Notitia Dignitatum* by a rhetorical title such as the *limes Augustensis* or the *limes Fortensis*. *Ala Miliaria* is a particularly strong candidate for such a role given the evidence for its continued occupation represented by the reorganisation of its headquarters buildings.³⁸

VI.3.2 Dating

The homogeneity of the Numidian forts may suggest they were all built around the same time. Guey argued that *Bourada* was built under Constantine between 324-337, on the basis of a damaged inscription, coins and oil lamps from the site. *Centenarium Aqua Viva* can be assigned a slightly earlier construction date of 303 on the basis of the dedicatory inscription. Two *centenaria*, built further north, in *Sitifensis*, also fall within this Tetrarchic-Constantinian timespan, *Aqua Frigida* having been erected in 293 whilst *Centenarium Solis* was constructed in 313-314. Unfortunately the descriptions of these sites are too vague to say whether the structures conform to the type outlined above. The same can also be said of the *centenarium* built in 328 by the chieftain, *Masaisilen*, in the rugged *Grande Kabylie* region of *Mauretania Caesariensis*. In *Tripolitania*, there is no detailed evidence from any of the new style forts, but the dedicatory inscription from a fortlet erected in the earlier (and perhaps contemporaneous) *gasr* form, namely *Centenarium Tibubuci*, indicates a Diocletianic construction date. The inscription shows there was military building activity in the province during the early fourth century.³⁹

Altava: AAA 31,68, Pouthier 1956, 221 (plan), Marcillet-Jaubert 1968, 9 (air-photo), Lawless 1970 II, 60-61, cf. AE 1935, 86 = Marcillet-Jaubert 1968, nr.67. Lawless considers that the south-west enclosure, on Marcillet-Jaubert's air-photograph, represents a late citadel, rather than the fort of the *cohort II Sardorum*. At 0.84 hectares it is a bit small, but perhaps it only held part of the cohort.

38. Severan foundations: Salama 1953/1955, and 1977, 585-586, 595. *Medjedel*: Leschi 1938-1940 = 1957, 45-46 = AE 1938, 51 (AD 149).

39. For the dating of *Bourada* see Guey 1939, 206-208, 214-219 & 245-247. The coinage from nearby *Drah Soud East* was too worn to indicate more than a Late Roman date, also indicated by the Christian motifs on oil lamps from the site. One of the lamps from the latter site can be dated to the beginning of the fifth century by comparison with a coin type of the period; see Guey 1939, 205-206 and Rebuffat 1977-1979, 259-260.

Aqua Viva: Leschi 1941A and 1943; AE 1942-1943, 81.

Centenarium Solis: CIL VIII 8913; *Centenarium Aqua Frigida*: CIL VIII 20215 = ILS 6886 and see below section VII.5.3.

The *centenarium* of *Masaisilen* at or near *Ourthi n'Taroummant*: CIL VIII 9010. For discussion of the site see AAA 6,97-99 and below sections VII.5.2, VIII.2.4 and Appendix K.1.

Centenarium Tibubuci: CIL VIII 22763 = ILS 9352 and below section VII.2.2.

One should not imagine that every fort in North Africa of Later Roman type was built in during the Tetrarchy or the following period of Constantine's reign. The reigns of Constantine's sons and the Valentinianic dynasty are also represented. The gateways erected at Kherba of the Aouisset, near *Columnata*, in 346, may have belonged to a military installation, though it is perhaps more likely that the *portas ac valvas* formed part of a small town's defences. More useful are the inscriptions from Ras el-Ain which reveal refurbishment was underway at that fort between 355-360. Similarly, a fort (*castra*) was built at El Bahira just north of the Hodna Mountains between 375-378. Unfortunately no archaeological trace survives of this installation.⁴⁰

Despite these later phases the assemblage is clearly weighted towards the earlier third of the fourth century. Although predominantly based on epigraphic evidence there is some reason to believe that this may fairly accurately reflect the chronological pattern of Later Roman military building activity in North Africa. It seems not unreasonable to connect the construction of these new forts with the administrative reorganisation of the African frontiers, which took place during the Tetrarchy, its subdivision into a series of small territorial commands (*limites*). The Constantinian building work might also be associated with this, since it might be expected that the process of reorganisation took a considerable time to implement, with the *Gemellae* sector perhaps being treated later than the *limes Tubuniensis*.

VI.4 FRONTIER COMMANDS AND TROOP DEPLOYMENT

The relationship between the headquarters and the subordinate forts within each district needs careful study to establish the respective roles of each. By definition every headquarters base will have housed the *praepositus*, the administrative staff and records for the frontier sector, but beyond that there is little certainty.

VI.4.1 Tripolitania

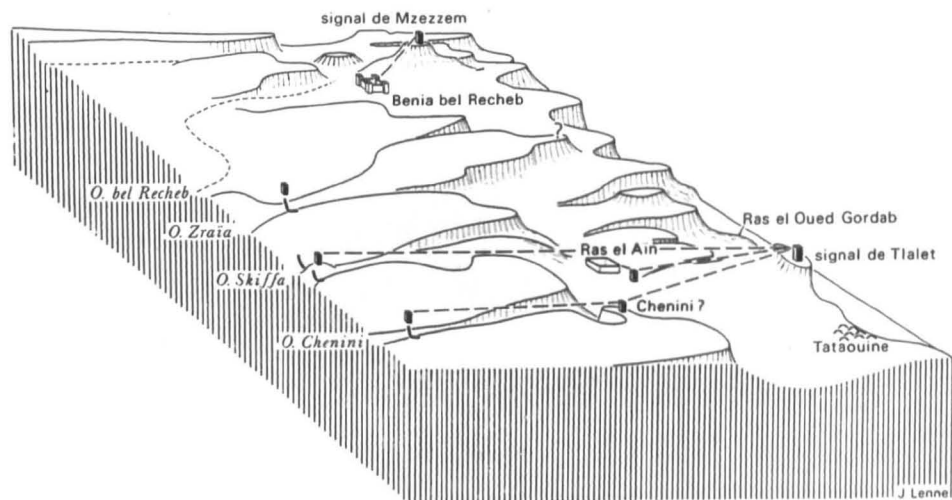
The *limes Talalatensis* is in many ways representative of military dispositions in western Tripolitania. Two forts in particular, Ras el-Ain and Benia bel-Recheb, can be ascribed to this command. They, and their associated watchtowers and valley blocking walls (*clausurae*) in the Jebel Demmer, all form an interconnected group of installations. The two forts were of very different sizes. Ras el-Ain was just under a hectare whilst Benia bel Recheb was a mere 0.16 hectares. Nor were they contemporary constructions. Whereas Ras el-Ain was a mid third century creation, Benia bel Recheb was built in

40. Kherba des Aouisset: Cadenat 1953, 169; Salama 1954, 205-229 = AB 1955, 139. For discussion see below section VIII.2.4 and Appendix K.2.

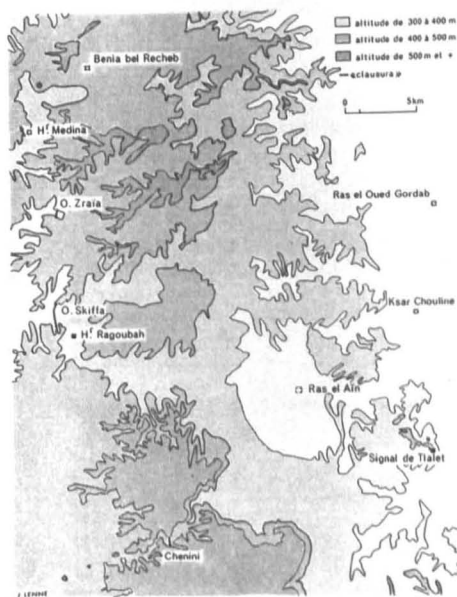
Ras el-Ain: CIL VIII 22766 + 22767 = ILAF 11 and CIL VIII 22768.

El Bahira (ex Pascal) = Salah Bey: CIL VIII 10937 = 20566.

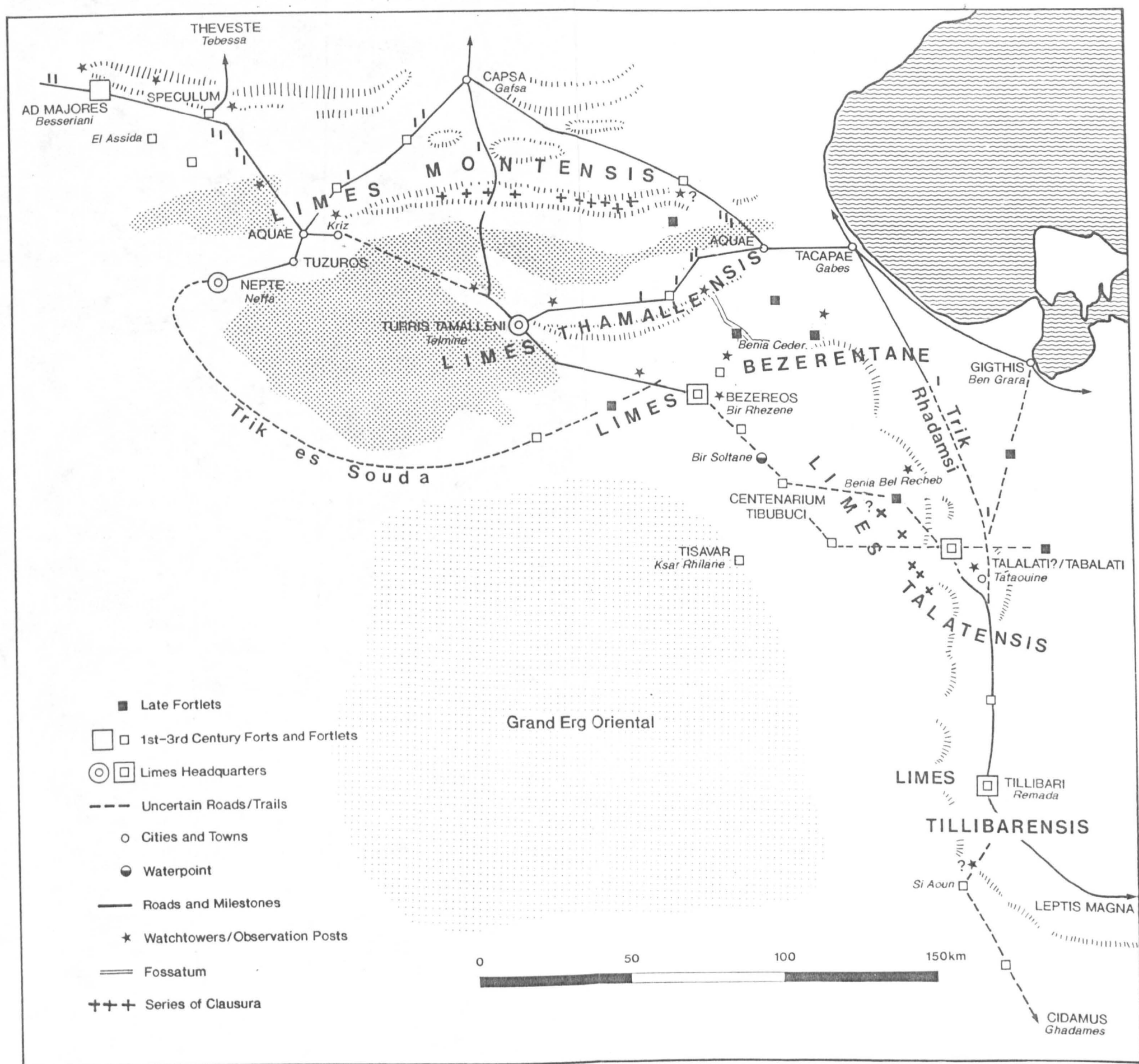
THE LIMES TALALATENSIS



(after Troussset 1990)



(after Troussset 1974)



The Limes of Western Tripolitania: Headquarters and Outposts

(based on Troussel 1980 A)

the style typical of fourth century forts. The explanation for these differences is straightforward. Despite some residual doubt over the site of the headquarters of the *limes Talalatensis* it is reasonably certain that Ras el-Ain held a fair proportion, if not all, of the troops based in the area. Recheb, on the other hand, was a much later and less important addition - a small fortlet probably constructed to house the troops outposted to the northernmost *clausurae* of the Demmer chain, which are over 20 km from Ras el-Ain.⁴¹

This pattern is typical of Late Imperial Tripolitania. The difference in size between the newly built and the retained forts is so very great that it must reflect a difference in function and importance. The most plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that the *quadriburgia* were in every sense additions to, rather than replacements of, the pre-existing second-third century forts such as Ras el-Ain and Remada. The latter not only served as the local headquarters and supply bases for the new *limites* but also retained their function as the principal accommodation for the frontier troops. The new forts were most probably nothing more than outlying police stations, sometimes associated with nearby *clausurae*.

VI.4.2 Numidia

The same does not seem to have been the case in the *limites Tubuniensis* and *Gemellensis* of Numidia. Although the new forts there were not as large as the regimental bases of the Principate (Zebaret et Tir apart) they were clearly able to hold significant detachments. The fort of Aqua Viva is described as a *centenarium* and was certainly large enough to hold a hundred men, so it seems reasonable to accept the general accuracy of the label. Given the broadly similar size of so many of the forts in these two sectors, it appears a policy was adopted of breaking the regiments up into 50-150 man detachments and outposting them, either beyond the line of the *fossatum* or right onto the barrier. In other words, the new forts may have taken over the role of accommodating the local garrison from the older sites, though not replacing the latter entirely.⁴²

VI.4.3 The Mauretaniae

The pattern in the two Mauretaniae is less clear because of the limited amount of archaeological research carried out there, but what evidence there is suggests that *Caesariensis* more closely resembled Tripolitania than Numidia. On the

41. The Jebel Demmer forts: for Ras el-Ain see Troussset 1974, 98-102, nr.109, Mattingly 1984, 266-267; for Benia bel Recheb see Troussset 1974, 95-96, nr.105, Mattingly 1984, 271 & 555, fig.28. See also section VII.3.2.

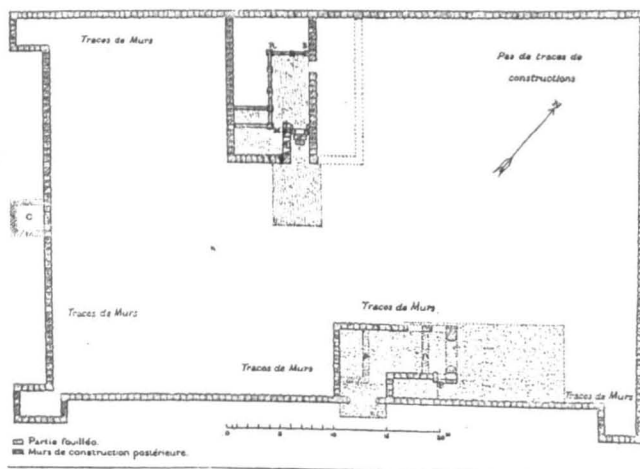
42. This theory is explored further in Appendix M, where the arrangements in the *limes Gemellensis* and, in particular, the significance of the internal buildings of forts along the Segua bent el Krass, are discussed.

Fortes such as *Aquae Herculis* and Loth Bordj presumably housed far less sizeable detachments, concerned only with policing the roads.

Olive Pressing Floor – Fort Parallelogramme



(after Baradez 1949)



Benia Guedah Ceder

(after Toutain 1903)

other hand the epigraphically attested existence of a *centenarium* and a *castra* as well as the small forts recorded by Baradez may imply that the *limes Thamallulensis* in *Sitifensis* reproduces the Numidian form of deployment.

VI.4.4 Storage and Supply

The new forts may well have continued to rely on their *limes* headquarters to serve as their main storage depot, drawing supplies at intervals and transporting them to the relevant *centenarium*. Certainly no *horrea* have yet been identified in any of the newly built fourth century forts, though the lack of modern excavation means this observation must be treated with some caution.

In contrast, an olive press uncovered in one of the chambers set against the enceinte of Fort Parallelogramme may point towards local supply. It would imply that the garrison was receiving their oil ration, or part of it, unprocessed from farms in the immediate neighbourhood and crushing the olives themselves. The same may be the case with other items of the soldiers' rations when abundant supplies were available locally. From the reign of Valentinian I a proportion of the frontier army's supplies was commuted to cash, the balance of the soldiers' supplies presumably being bought locally by the quartermasters (*actuarii*). By the late fourth century the *limitanei* received all their *annona* in cash. The olive press may represent one scheme devised by the *actuarii* to make the ration allowance go further for the benefit of their unit, and doubtless their own purse. In a region of abundant olive production, such as southern Numidia, it would probably have been more economical to purchase raw olives rather than processed oil and then crush the fruit in the fort. The proximity of supply would outweigh the higher transport costs of moving the bulkier unrefined harvest and the soldiers' own labour would cost nothing.⁴³

The role of the *limes* headquarters as supply bases is underlined by an inscription discovered at *Tubusuctu*. Dating to 304-307 it records the building of granaries (*horrea*) after the revolt of the *Quinquegentanei*. This work may well have been associated with the establishment of the *limes Tubusubditani* and mark the formalisation of an emergency base established during the campaigns of the preceding decade.⁴⁴

43. For the olive press within Fort Parallelogramme see Baradez 1949, 247, pls.68B & 204C. The possibility the press relates to some secondary post-military phase of the site cannot be excluded. There are also 2 presses in the adjacent village, cf. Baradez 1949, 200, 247 & pl.209C. For a fully referenced summary of the legislation relating to the commutation and transport of the rations assigned to the *limitanei* see Jones *LRE*, 626-630 & 1260-1262.

44. CIL VIII 8836 = ILS 645: [DD(omini) nn(ostri) Diocletianu[s] et Maximianus seniores Aug(usti) et / [dd(omini) nn(ostri) Constantius et Maximianus invicti imperatores et / [Severus et Maximinus nobili]ssimi Caesares, / [quo tempore d(omini) n(ostri) Maxim]ianus invictus senior Aug(ustus) feliciter / [comprimens turbas Quinquege]ntaneorum ex Tubusuctitana / [regione copiis iuva]retur, horrea in Tubusuctitana / [civitate fieri] praeceperunt, anno pro(vinciae) cclxv. The restorations, by Pouille (1869, 704), filling the lost portions of the inscription should obviously be treated with caution, though they reproduce the typically florid style of the Tetrarchy in an authentic fashion and probably reflect the general sense of

VI.4.5 Conclusion

Thus the old regimental bases in Tripolitania may have functioned much as they had done during the Principate, with only small detachments outposted to police stations in the surrounding countryside. In contrast, a more flexible system can be observed in Numidia, where the late forts established along or beyond the linear barriers were capable of holding much larger detachments, perhaps as many as 100 men each. This may imply the headquarters bases relinquished, at least partially, the role of accommodating the local garrison, leaving just a core administrative and logistics presence there. The precise form this took is uncertain. The new forts may have housed permanent units in the manner of the regimental forts of the preceding era, but perhaps a more attractive interpretation is that detachments were rotated out from the main base with the troops of each *limes* retaining a common identity and possibly even some elements of the regimental structure, as hinted at by the epigraphic evidence. There is a clear earlier parallel for such a process in the shape of the many legionary vexillations stationed in the Saharan Atlas and Tripolitania during the third century.

Thus, in Numidia full advantage was taken of the new territorial system of command to spread troops out more evenly throughout the frontier zone by breaking units down into smaller detachments. This presumably produced benefits in terms of more effective policing.

It is worth asking why this policy was adopted in Numidia but not, for example, in Tripolitania. The explanation is probably the traditional pre-eminence of the Numidian command within Roman Africa (Egypt excluded). During the Principate it had been a senatorial command and home of *legio III Augusta*. This military pre-eminence was continued during the Late Empire with the creation of the post of *comes Africae*, the only dedicated military command in the African diocese until the very late fourth century. In Tripolitania and Caesariensis military and civil powers were usually combined in the person of the provincial governor. Consequently, it was in Numidia and neighbouring Mauretania Sitifensis that the bulk of the new legions and cavalry *vexillationes* was stationed alongside *III Augusta*, as noted in Chapter V.

These units form the core of the field army listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* under the authority of the *comes Africae*. Their presence in the central provinces and their exclusion from the structure of local frontier commands meant that the *comes* (and previously, under the Tetrarchy, the *praeses Numidiae Militianae*) always had at his disposal sizeable

the original text. Thus it might be preferable to restore *limite* in place of *regione* at the beginning of line 6. The instruction to initiate the work was given in 304, as indicated by the provincial era but not completed until after the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian and their elevation to the figurehead status of *seniores*. [Quinquee]ntaneorum is surely an allusion to the warfare of 297. For the site of Tubusuctu (Tiklat near El Kseur) AAA 7,27.

forces unhampered by routine policing duties. These could readily be used in the *limites* to mount punitive operations or suppress unrest which the local territorial troops could not cope with. The Numidian commander could therefore deploy his *limitanei* without having to worry about keeping some in reserve to respond to such problems. The province's two long running barriers may have benefitted from the dispersal of troops along their length. His counterparts in Tripolitania and Mauretania Caesariensis were less well furnished and would have had to request assistance of the *comes* if they needed major reinforcements. This may explain the less pronounced dispersal of troops in the two provinces, as significant numbers of men were retained at the various *limes* headquarters to enforce imperial authority in the frontier zone. To some extent such headquarters forces may have taken the place of legions and cavalry *vexillationes*.

It is unfortunate that the pattern in Mauretania Sitifensis (especially the *limes Zabensis* and the *limes Thamallulensis*) is so unclear. That province contained the other very long linear barrier in North Africa, and moreover it fell under the authority of the *comes* at a relatively early date. By the time the *Notitia* was drawn up it was obviously considered as part of the core of his command. A similar pattern of deployment may therefore have been implemented there, which might be revealed by field research on the Hodna barrier.

VI.5 THE SIZE OF THE FRONTIER ARMY

An important implication of the re-evaluation of the evidence for regular frontier troops in Chapter II is that the garrison of the North African provinces was rather more substantial than has previously been argued. For example, Jones (*LRE*, 1450, table xv) assigned only 3500 *limitanei* to the African diocese, all stationed in Tripolitania

It is of course very difficult to estimate the size of the African territorial garrison, after its reorganisation under Diocletian. There is no guarantee that all the regiments known to have belonged to the North African armies during the Severan period were still there by the time of Diocletian's accession. Losses during the various Mauretanian campaigns or the need to reinforce other crumbling frontiers may have removed some from the roster. Furthermore there is considerable uncertainty as to whether unit strengths remained at levels comparable with those of the Principate, given the financial and administrative difficulties faced by the imperial administration during the turbulent mid-late third century.

One tempting means of gauging the strength of Late Roman frontier garrisons is to use fort sizes.⁴⁵ There are a number of serious problems facing this method, which are outlined in Appendix N. However, even if it was possible to estimate the number of troops that a given Late Roman fort could

45. Cf. for example Duncan-Jones 1978, 554-556 = 1990, 214-217, and Macmullen 1984, 574-575.

accommodate, there remains a further fundamental objection to the use of this technique, particularly in a North African context. It makes the implicit but simplistic assumption, common in Roman frontier studies, that all forts were permanently manned by a set complement of troops, usually a distinct regiment, who filled the installation more or less to capacity. It is just conceivable that the Roman army was more flexible than this.

Severan arrangements in the Saharan Atlas and Tripolitania illustrate this point well. Detachments from *legio III Augusta* manned small forts and outposts, often serving alongside smaller 'collections' of auxiliaries who perhaps provided a mounted component. No one has tried to calculate the size of the first-third century garrison of the region on the basis of the visible forts of the period. A bewildering range of sites is known. The inscribed troop lists from the small Severan post of *Castellum Dimmidi* reveal that it probably housed little more than a hundred men. It and others like it may be envisaged as the precursors of the *Aqua Viva* style of *centenaria*, showing that this latter type does not necessarily bear witness to a reduced frontier garrison. That a regimental framework is discernable in this Severan deployment, with some larger sites being interpreted as the main bases of individual regiments, is largely the result of the epigraphic and historical evidence from the region and our overall knowledge of the Roman army. The garrisons of fourth century *centenaria*, such as *Aqua Viva*, probably reflect a similar pattern of widespread outposting, but within smaller, more coherent areas, since these garrisons most likely represent detachments from the main headquarters of their respective *limites*.⁴⁶

Thus one should envisage a complex pattern of deployment at all times in the history of Roman Africa with forts and outposts, often half empty, manned by detachments varying in strength from the size of a cohort to a handful of men. It was doubtless continually changing as troops were rotated backwards and forth from their main base to outposts. The regimental organisation was an administrative and above all a battlefield framework. It had less relevance for peacetime deployment and the policing activity of the Roman army.

VI.5.1 Limes Strengths

A better, though rough and ready, way forward is to use the individual commands to gauge the overall size of the frontier armies. Given the origins of the *praepositi limitum* each *limes* command may be equated with an auxiliary regiment or legionary vexillation of the third century army. Moreover the *praepositi limitum* have similar rank to regimental commanders. As Augustine's correspondent, Publicola, makes clear some of the officers in charge of *limites* were mere *decuriones*, whilst

46. See Picard 1947, 177-206, Lassère 1980, and Le Bohec 1989A, for third century troop lists. For Severan deployment see also, Salama 1953/1955; and 1977, 584-587 & 595 carte 4; and Daniels 1987, 253. Cf. section II.2.

others were *tribuni*. These grades equate to those of third century unit commanders in North Africa and suggest a similar scale of responsibility.

In practice, of course, this approach is not quite so straightforward. It is difficult to establish the size of Later Roman auxiliary regiments. Consequently there are no clear-cut figures which can in turn be applied to the *limites*. Furthermore, the origin of the *limites* varied greatly and this in turn will have affected the garrison strengths of the individual military districts and the force levels of the main regional commands.

The origin of the individual commands was touched upon during the discussion of the *limes* headquarters (VI.2). Many were probably based on pre-existing auxiliary regiments or one-time legionary detachments. The *limes Gemellensis* in Numidia, the *limites Bizerentane*, *Talalatensis*, *Tillibarensis*, and doubtless *Tenthettani* in Tripolitania and the *limites Audiensis* and *Columnatensis* all fall into this category. Others, notably the *limes Bidensis* and *limes Tubusubditani*, may represent responses to the warfare of the mid-late third century. Some *limites* may have been created after the initial Diocletianic reorganisation, either by subdividing an existing command or by establishing a new command designed to counter an outbreak of banditry or inter-tribal feuding in an area where previously there had been no military presence. In the former case the initial *limes* force would doubtless have been split like the zone itself. In the latter case the garrisoning problem might have been solved by drafting in a vexillation, perhaps a composite unit somewhat similar to the *numeri collati* attested in the third century. In both instances it is likely that troop numbers were lower than was the case in a *limes* based around an intact auxiliary unit.

On this basis one may envisage a few of the more important *limites* having garrisons of up to a thousand men, particularly at the beginning of the period, but most were probably much lower, perhaps 300-500. In some cases the figures may have been lower still. This would accord with the latest interpretation of the Diocletianic papyri from *Panopolis* recording payments in cash and kind to various Egyptian units. These seem to indicate the cohorts and *alae* with strengths of only 100-200 men. However, despite considerable scholarly effort all studies of the Beatty papyri still face the inherent problem that the documents only record the type of payment, the total amount and the period for which it was made, where relevant. The rate per man has to be inferred and it is not always clear that the auxiliary units referred to are complete regiments rather than detachments. Figures derived from the *Panopolis* texts must therefore be used with caution and it would be prudent to await less ambiguous evidence before making definitive pronouncements on the size of units of the *laterculum minus*.⁴⁷

47. For analysis of *P. Beatty Panop.* 1-2 (ed. Skeat, 1964) see Jones *LRE*, 623 & 1257-1259 and by Duncan-Jones 1978. Jones' unit strengths were drastically reduced by Duncan-Jones. The latter's figures for higher grade troops such as legionaries are plausible but it is by no means certain that the rates of pay

In one region of the African diocese low figures of that order are credible. The scarcity of typically Late Roman fortifications in eastern Tripolitania and the difficulty of identifying the headquarters of any *limites* there, is particularly noteworthy when contrasted with Numidia and the western half of Tripolitania. Analysis of the Tripolitanian chapter in the *Notitia Dignitatum* would suggest this cannot be explained by a complete absence of military organisation in that area. On the contrary a number of commands - perhaps as many as five or six - can be tentatively assigned to the eastern half of the province. It would point towards district garrisons that may each have numbered little more than 100 men and perhaps as few as 50. These regular soldiers presumably served as a military cadre, performing minimal policing duties and stiffening the tribal levies on whom the main responsibility for punitive action must have fallen.⁴⁸

The force levels for the local commands suggested above would give totals for Tripolitania, Mauretania Caesariensis and the *comes'* provinces of 2000-4500, 2500-4500 and 2500-5000 respectively. Of course these figures comprise only a proportion of the troops available to the three generals of the African diocese, namely the inferior grade within the *limitanei*. In addition, there were the better quality units, the *ripenses* and later the *comitatenses*, as well as the reservoir of tribal irregulars (*gentiles*), present throughout the frontier region. It is possible that the garrisons of the *limites* declined in strength as the fourth century progressed. The steady growth of the regional field army, observed in section V.2, would doubtless have absorbed a greater and greater share of the available fiscal resources, at the expense of the *limitanei par excellence*. Thus, whereas the upper range of figures given above form quite plausible force levels for the Diocletianic era, the lower estimates might be more appropriate to the end of the fourth century.⁴⁹

The resultant picture is one of an army not markedly inferior in size to that of earlier periods, which accords with the impression conveyed by the archaeological evidence from most parts of the region. If the three totals put forward above are adjusted to fit the framework of the two

for the auxiliary cavalrymen were the same as those of legionaries as Duncan-Jones assumes. Further, even he is forced to admit that his figure of 21-22 men for the *ala II Herculia dromedariorum* is too low. He suggests an earlier overpayment could account for this but it is perhaps more likely that they represent a handful of soldiers stationed at *Toeto* and *Psinabla* away from the main body of the regiment. If this is the case the other figures need not represent full complements either.

48. For the archaeological evidence from eastern Tripolitania and its significance see section VIII.1. For discussion of the relevant *limites* in *ND Occ. XXXI* see above VI.1.3.

49. These totals are calculated on the following basis:

Upper range - one *limes* with a 1000 man garrison; the remainder 500 strong, except in Tripolitania where 5 commands have been allocated 100 men; the 8 *limites* demonstrably located in Numidia, Byzacena and Sitifensis are included in the *comes'* total as is the *limes Balaretani*, which could lie in Sitifensis, the remainder are ignored as duplication.

Lower range - all *limites* garrisoned by roughly 300 men except 6 of the Tripolitanian commands which have been assigned only 50 men each; only the initial 8 *limites* in *Occ. XXV* have been counted towards the *comes'* total here.

military governorships of the Principate, namely the (larger) province of Mauretania Caesariensis and the Numidian-Tripolitanian command assigned to the legate of *III Augusta*, this gives figures of 3300-6500 and 3500-7000 respectively. It is clear that the second figure compares well with that calculated for the auxiliaries of the legate's *exercitus*. The first figure is rather on the low side when compared with the Mauretanian army of the Principate, but whereas the latter was composed entirely of auxiliaries the troops of the *limites* could count on the support of field army units, stationed in Caesariensis certainly by the reign of Valentinian and possibly earlier. The higher grade units may be equated with the old style *legio III Augusta*, which had probably numbered 5000-6000 men. The *ripenses/comitatenses* eventually surpassed that total, though at what date is unclear. Equally important in this context, however, is the fact that from the very beginning of the period legions or cavalry vexillations stationed in Numidia, for example, were more directly available to reinforce Caesariensis than had been the case previously. The institution of a vicar with responsibility for the entire African diocese and later the creation of the post of *comes Africae* meant those troops were incorporated within the same overall administrative framework as the *limitanei* of Mauretania Caesariensis.

CHAPTER VII

GARRISON DEPLOYMENT AND FRONTIER POLICING

This chapter is concerned with the role of the Later Roman army in the frontier zone. In order to understand this it is necessary to examine the placing of military installations. The detailed problems of interpretation and the variable quality of the archaeological record are covered in Appendix A.2 & 3. A more general hazard is that of looking at Roman deployment, inevitably with the benefit of maps of a quality the Romans never possessed, and imposing modern perceptions of a military or geographical nature on the patterns which seem to emerge. Roads and forts may be all too easily explained as barriers or 'frontier lines' whilst deep networks of garrisons or overlapping deployments have been construed as systems of 'defence in depth'. Secondly 'frontier systems' are often discussed as though it was the roads, the linear barriers or the forts themselves which guarded the frontier rather than the soldiers who used those structures. It is essential to recognise that such military installations are only the physical manifestation of the Roman army. In other words they can only be meaningfully interpreted in terms of what tasks they enabled the frontier troops to perform.

This analysis focuses on particular areas where the use of specific types of structure, such as roads and running barriers, may be readily explained. In doing so it will try to show how the Roman army reacted to the problems posed by the local terrain and the people living in it, and what it was seeking to achieve. The danger of anachronistic modern interpretation may be minimised by first reviewing what the primary ancient sources actually say regarding the activity and deployment of the army in the frontier zone.

VII.1 THE ROLE OF THE FRONTIER ARMY IN THE LITERARY AND EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

The contemporary literary and documentary evidence is a crucial source for understanding the role of the Later Roman army in the frontier zone. The most informative documents are few in number and it is necessary to use comparable material which originates outside the strict chronological and geographical limits of this study.

VII.1.1 The letter of Publicola

One source in particular, a letter addressed to St Augustine by a certain Publicola, vividly illuminates life in the Tripolitanian frontier zone at the end of the fourth century. It describes how barbarians arriving amongst the *Arzuges*, (the inhabitants of the frontier zone) had to swear an oath in the name of their own gods, before 'the decurions or tribunes who are in charge of the *limes*'. The terms of the oath are not stated but presumably entailed abiding by imperial laws during

their stay in the province for it was on this basis that landowners like Publicola, or their tenants, had the confidence to engage the service of these nomads to guard their harvests and transport their goods, or act as guides and escorts.¹

It is significant that the nomads were not the only ones to give oaths. The farmers themselves engaged in this process perhaps to ensure that they would hand over the crops that were due so that nomads would not be held accountable for shortfall by the landowner. The *praepositi limitum*, too, had to swear, presumably to reassure the barbarians that the soldiers would not molest them.

VII.1.2 Anastasius' Edict of 501

A second description of the work of a North African frontier garrison derives from a much more official source, the edict of Anastasius issued roughly a hundred years later, in 501, to regulate military affairs in the ducate of Libya Pentapolis. The duties of the frontier troops (*castrensi*) are stated as guarding the roads and ensuring that no Roman or Egyptian visits the barbarians without a permit. They themselves were not to visit the barbarians to make compulsory purchases nor were they to have commercial dealings with them. Only one tribe, the *Macae*, had the right to enter the province and then they must have letters of permission from their *clarissimus praefectus*, who would either have been a Roman officer or a tribal noble nominated or recognised by the military authorities (as was the practice in fourth century Mauretania Caesariensis).²

VII.1.3 The Bu Ngem Ostraca

The Bu Ngem ostraca of the mid-third century consist, in addition to unit rosters, of reports and correspondence received by the *praepositus* of the unit stationed in the fort. They show that Bu Ngem maintained an extensive network of outposts, four of which are named. Far from being remote and beleaguered these outposts were in constant contact with Bu Ngem, with messages criss-crossing the desert (though one wonders whether some of these despatches represent in part an attempt to combat the tedium of life and the sense of

1. Publicola's letter: Aug. Ep. 46-47. For discussion see Goodchild 1976, 36-37 = 1950, 31; Jones *LRE*, 652 & 1271; Jones 1971, 294; Rebuffat 1977, 412-413; Shaw 1982, 48; Mattingly 1984, 96 & 229.

It is important to realise that the *Arzuges* are not themselves the nomadic outsiders (*barbari*) referred to in the letter, rather these activities take place amongst the *Arzuges* ie. the sedentary farmers of the frontier zone.

2. Anastasius' regulations: *SEG* IX 356 & 414, esp. section xi. Examples have been found at Ptolemais, Tocra and Apollonia, the last a fine marble example appropriate to a military headquarters. For text and discussion see Olivero 1936; cf. also Maspero 1912, 23, 64 & 100-101; Jones *LRE*, 662 & 671; Jones 1971, 293; Pringle 1981, 71, 80 & 401; Rebuffat 1988, 67.

The *Macae* are probably the same confederation found in south-east Tripolitania - the Wadi zone and Syrtic pre-desert - indicating a degree of continued Roman authority in the 5th-6th centuries over the western approaches to Cyrenaica, cf. Rebuffat 1988, 61-67.

isolation it may have engendered). The fort thus lay at the centre of web of intelligence about frontier movements. The *ostraca* portray a peaceful frontier region. Only one contains any reference to conflict and even this is apparently very small in scale. Military supplies are forwarded by soldiers in fertile regions apparently without fear that the native cameleers to whom the goods were entrusted would be impeded. Incidents thought worthy of note include the capture of a runaway slave and the arrival of a refugee (from the *Garamantes*) at one of the outposts. Caravans arrive from Garamantia perhaps bearing entry permits issued by troops stationed in the client kingdom for that very purpose, for some *ostraca* refer to soldiers stationed *cum Garamantibus*.³

VII.1.4 The Customs Tariffs

One final role mentioned in the sources is customs control imposed on those transhuming across the frontier. This is most fully dealt with by the famous tariff of 202 from Zarai. A second but far more fragmentary example was found at *Lambaesis*.⁴ Being relatively close to the Numidian-Mauretanian inter-provincial boundary and the imperial frontier Zarai was well-placed to act as a customs post for both internal east-west traffic and the north-south flows crossing the frontier. Doubtless it did play some role in both but the items listed on the tariff would suggest, as Darmon, Fentress, Shaw and Whittaker have argued, that the main flows concerned were north-south. Most were either products of a pastoral economy, appropriate to transhumant tribesmen crossing the frontier, or could have been transported by the nomads from the oases of southern Numidia or the Saharan Atlas.⁵

It is presumably in connection with such activities that a number of slave or freedmen officials, recorded on inscriptions, were serving. Most interesting in this respect is one found at *Sitifis*, the epitaph of Clementianus, *qui vilicavit Sitifi et portus et praesidia*. In this context it seems reasonable to suppose the *portus* were the customs stations on the interprovincial boundary, such as the site actually named *Ad Portum* (El Eulma). The *praesidia* on the other hand are surely the forts and fortlets astride the north-south transhumance routes, attested archaeologically and recorded in geographical sources, notably the Peutinger Table

3. See in general Rebuffat & Marichal 1973; Rebuffat 1977, 407-410; Marichal 1979.

Outposts: Marichal 1979, 448-450. Conflict: Rebuffat 1977, 407. The *refuga*, Abban: Marichal 1979, 450.

Supplies: Rebuffat 1977, 408-409; Marichal 1979, 447-448.

Cum Garamantibus: Rebuffat 1977, 408; Marichal 1979, 451. A centurion, Aurelius, apparently carved his name (in Greek) on the spur site of Zinchera near Germa (Garama) in the 3rd or 4th century: AE 1971, 486 = 1975, 869b, cf. Daniels 1968, 182 & 1970, 55. Desanges & Lancel 1970, 13 and Euzennat 1977A, 442 have rejected this interpretation, whilst Le Bohec 1989A, 173 n.195 is uncertain, but the original editor J.M. Reynolds had no doubts (C.M. Daniels pers. comm. and cf. Reynolds 1989, 123).

4. The Zarai tariff: CIL VIII 4508 = 18643; the *Lambaesis* tariff: AE 1914, 234, cf. Cagnat 1914. For discussion see Darmon 1964; Whittaker 1978, 346-347; Fentress 1979, 183-184 & 208-209 and Shaw 1982, 46-47.

5. Typical oasis products listed include figs, dates and alum. As Fentress (1979, 184) notes, even the *garum* and the sponges itemised by the Zarai tariff may have been transported by nomads for part of the journey, having been carried first from the region of Tacapae to the Ziban and exchanged there.

(*Lemelli presidium*, *Siuaddurusi p(rae)sidium* and *Ad Centenarium*). Clementianus was presumably despatched periodically to serve alongside the troops in these posts, providing the fiscal competence necessary to exact the tolls correctly.⁶

VII.1.5 Discussion

Certain common strands can be drawn out of these very different sources. The overriding emphasis is on the control and supervision of movement within the frontier zone, doubtless with the intention of discriminating between peaceful and hostile traffic. Hence the reference to the *castrensi* of Pentapolis guarding roads, for example.

In Pentapolis Anastasius' regulations indicate movement into and out of the province was not simply controlled but even prevented. This forms a marked contrast with the other sources. Shaw (1982, 47) has emphasised that the *Zarai* list tariffs livestock at a much lower rate than the trade commodities which the nomads were carrying northwards. The livestock rate might be equated to a *scriptura* or fixed head tax levied on pasture land. The trade goods were charged at the normal rate of two or two and a half percent of value. This shows complete acceptance by the Roman authorities of the seasonal transhumance which is such a marked feature of the African frontier zone and recognition that their livestock were part of their subsistence base rather than goods to be traded.

Equally, there is no evidence that the army played any role in determining the routes used by the pastoralists, directing them to grazing approved by the authorities on land not required for the '*mise en valeur*' of the provinces. No trace of any policy of either exclusion or direction can be detected in the third-fourth century Tripolitanian sources. The Bu Ngem ostraca merely imply that such movement was to be closely monitored and reported upon, whilst Publicola's letter simply exhibits, indirectly, an official concern that barbarians provided some guarantee of their good conduct whilst in contact with the emperor's subjects. Rather than the Edict of Anastasius indicating a change of imperial policy towards transhumance during the intervening one hundred years, it may be that patterns of transhumance in Cyrenaica during the Classical period did not necessitate much movement into and out of the province.

The system of oath-swearing outlined by Publicola was one guarantee of nomadic good behavior. It seems to have been effective for Publicola was not concerned that the barbarians were untrustworthy but rather whether, as a devout Christian, he should accept such pagan oaths as the basis of a contract

6. Clementianus' epitaph: AE 1942-1943, 63, *D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum) / Clementianus vil(icus) / IIII p(ublicorum) A(frica) vix(it) annis / xxxviii, qui vilicavit / Sitifi et portus / et praesidia / h(ic) s(itus) e(st)*. For El Bulma see AAA 16,421 and Février 1964, etc. For discussion of the sites recorded on the Peutinger Table (*Seg. II*) see AAA 26,3-4 (*Lemellef*) and AAA 26,69 (*Zarai*), cf. also AAA 27,93.

between himself and the nomads. Moreover the fact that the *praepositi* and farmers, too, swore oaths, for the benefit of the nomads, contradicts the more apocalyptic views that the latter were able to wander across the frontier zone looting and pillaging at will. Clearly the *limitanei* were a menace to the barbarians if the appropriate safeguards were not obtained and procedures followed. The suggestion that this was a two-way process, is echoed by the passage '*[q]ui nunquam periuravi, neque fide fregi neque de Romanos neque de Mauros*' in the epitaph of Masties, whom Février has now reinterpreted as a *praepositus limitis*, rather than a fifth-sixth century Moorish 'imperator'.¹

The importance of oath-swearing as a instrument of frontier control is borne out by earlier and later evidence. The second-third century *conloquia* and altars of peace at *Volubilis* bear witness to a long series of meetings between the governor of Tingitana and the paramount chief of one powerful tribal confederation, the *Baquates*. It is unlikely the practice was restricted to the *Baquates*. Much later, during the sixth century, the fierce revolt which erupted when 79 Laguatan chiefs were massacred in the palace of the *dux*, Sergius, in violation of the solemn promises he had made for their safe conduct, demonstrates the continuing importance of this diplomatic device. Oaths did not only rely on religious sanctity to ensure their effectiveness. The face to face contact between the representatives of the barbarian tribesmen and the Roman army, which such ceremonies necessitated, must also have been crucial in building up trust and establishing diplomatic relationships across the frontier.²

This system of frontier policing and monitoring was sustained by a host of bureaucratic documentation passing hither and thither on *ostraca*, tablets or papyri. The Bu Ngem *ostraca* provide the clearest demonstration of this but the Sirtic hinterland of the third century was obviously not unique. The Anastasian Edict mentions letters supplied to individual *Macae* by their prefect authorising them to enter the Pentapolis. Doubtless these served the same combined role of passport and work permit as the documents issued by the *praepositi limitum* on the Tripolitanian frontier a hundred years earlier. Possession of such letters would have ensured that the nomads were not molested by the troops and provided the guarantee needed by the landowners of the frontier zone before they could hire the specialised services of the barbarians. In addition military reports, of the type preserved at Bu Ngem, provided local commanders with constantly updated intelligence regarding frontier movements.

7. Masties' epitaph: AE 1945, 97 and now Morizot 1989, 273-274, for an improved reading. For reinterpretation as a *praepositus limitis* see Février 1988, 144 & 146-147 and below VIII.3.1.

8. The *conloquia* at *Volubilis*: Frezouls 1952, and 1957; Romanelli 1962; and Christol 1987, The inscriptions are conveniently assembled in IAW II (nrs., 348, 349, 350, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 376, 384, & 402. Cf. also IAW II 376 and CIL VI 1800 = AE 1941, 118 (Rome) for other references to principes of the *Baquates*. Sergius and the Laguatan chiefs: Procopius IV xxi 1-22, Corippus Ioh. III 397-400; cf. Pringle 1981, 30 and Mattingly 1983A, 99, 1987, 92.

Roman tolerance of pastoral transhumance as one element of African frontier zone society does not mean they were indifferent to the dangerous role semi-nomadic tribes might on occasion play within the broader socio-political framework of the region. They formed a highly dynamic element, in the sense that they moved over considerable distances bringing them into contact with many different sedentary and pastoral groups. This created considerable potential for both friction and alliances. It is noteworthy in the Cyrenaican edict that more stress is actually laid on the prohibition against Roman citizens visiting the barbarians than on that barring the latter from entering the province. This may imply official concern that disputes between sedentary communities over land or water resources might cause them to seek to draw different nomadic groups into the feud, escalating it into outright conflict. When fighting broke out between the *Oeenses* and the *Lepcitanii* of Tripolitania, in AD 70, *Oea* adopted precisely this strategy, inducing the wild *Garamantes* - '*gentem indomitam et inter accolae latrocinii fecundam*' - to ravage the territory of the *Lepcitanii*. Certainly, it would be naive to imagine that the society depicted by these sources was free from any stresses, despite the essentially symbiotic nature of the two main economic modes. On the contrary the very existence of mechanisms such as the exchange of oaths, indicates the stresses were only too apparent to all concerned. Publicola's description, notably his categorisation of the nomads as *barbari*, indicates the latter were seen as an alien element, albeit a useful one, by the elite of the sedentary agricultural world.⁹

The role of the *limitanei* garrisons within this frontier world was very much that of policemen. Great importance was attached to the protection of communications both for the army's own use and as a highly tangible symbol of the strength of imperial government. Thus the reference to the *castrenses* of Pentapolis guarding roads should not be misinterpreted as evidence that those routes were being used as frontier lines or barriers. The troops were surely watching over anyone using the highways, the sort of activity referred to by *CIL VIII* 2495 in AD 188 - *burgum speculatorium inter duas vias ad salutem commeantium nova tutela constitui*. They were doubtless stationed in forts at important crossroads, and perhaps in watchtowers along the roads. At the same time such activity provided an excellent opportunity to scrutinise those journeying along the highways, supplying local commanders by means of regular reports with an excellent picture of who was moving through their zone. Above all the soldiers were to ensure the recognition of imperial authority by all those living or travelling in the frontier zone and thereby ensure the emperor's peace and serenity was undisturbed.¹⁰

9. The *Oeenses* and the *Lepcitanii*: Tacitus *Hist.* IV 50; cf. Di Vita-Evrard 1979.

10. It is noteworthy that the two clearest examples of Later Roman castramentation in Cyrenaica, the small forts of Zavias et-Tailimun and Gasr el-Geballa (El-Benia), were both located at crossroads; cf. Goodchild 1976, 197, 199 & pl.67 = 1953, 67-68 & pl.VI.2 and *TIR: Cyrene* (Goodchild 1954D).

It is in the light of this literary and documentary testimony that the physical remains left by the Later Roman army will be interpreted in the remainder of the chapter.

VII.2 FRONTIER ROADS

VII.2.1 The Limes Tripolitanus Iter

The Antonine Itinerary route running from Gabes via *Turris Tamalleni*, through the *limes Tripolitanus* to *Leptis Magna* lies at the heart of any study of military organisation in Tripolitania. Chapters XXV and XXXI of the Western *Notitia* include several *limites* centred on sites along this road such as the *limes Thamallensis*, *Bizerentane*, *Talalatensis*, *Tillibarensis*, *Tenthettani*, and perhaps *Madensis*.¹¹

Most of the road's course is known, at least roughly. The eastern end of the route can be charted closely with the aid of milestones. Beyond the fifty-seventh milestone the general course of the road can be fixed as far as *Tentheos* (Edref near Zintan), based on the probable sites of the towns and villages named by the Itinerary. The next three sites *Thamascaltin*, *Thramusdusim* and *Tabuinati*, which lie on the central portion of the route, have not been discovered but their rough positions can be gauged by resorting to modern tribal or regional names such as the Slamatin and Tamzin or Tramezin. After *Tabuinati* the road can once again be followed closely from *Ad Amadum* (Dehibat), through *Tillibari* (Remada), and *Thebelami* (Henchir Medina) to *Tabalati/Talalati* (Ras el-Ain/Tatahouine). From there its course is very uncertain until *Bezereos* is reached. The remainder of the route via *Turris Tamalleni* to *Tacapae* is well known, the final section being as copiously supplied with milestones as its eastern counterpart.¹²

The uncertain stretch between *Bezereos* and *Tabalati/Talalati* is of crucial importance in understanding the function of the road. It is usually projected northward from Ras el-Ain either through the Jebel Demmer and down the Oued el-Hallouf via *Centenarium Tibubuci* or on a meandering and ill-defined line along the range of hills - the Jebels Demmer and Matmata - until it turned and headed westward to *Bezereos*. Of the scholars who have studied the matter recently Troussset (1974) favoured the former hypothesis, Hammond (1967) the latter, whilst Mattingly (1984, 466-467 and 1985, 73) marked both as possible routes.

There are a number of objections to both candidates. The Oued el-Hallouf option is too short to fit the distances recorded in the Itinerary and passes through one site, *Tibubuci*, not mentioned by it. Neither of these arguments is

11. See section VI.1.3. Route heading: *Itin Ant* 73.4-6; sites: 74.1-77.3. For the road and its associated *limites* see Di Vita 1964, 88-91.

12. For recent discussion of the *Limes Tripolitanus* route see Hammond 1967, Troussset 1974, 30-35, Euzennat & Troussset 1978, 135-138, Di Vita-Evrard 1979, 73-77, and Mattingly 1984, 380 n.2 (full bibliography) & 466-467.

conclusive in itself. The *centenarium* at *Tibubuci*, for example, was built during the Tetrarchy and thus would not be expected to appear in the list unless there was an earlier undefended station there. There is indeed good reason to believe that this route was used by traffic during the Roman period, for reasons which will be set out below, but considerable doubt must remain as to whether it represents part of the Antonine Itinerary road.

The same caveats do not apply to the mountain route, but it too is not without its problems. The Dahar plateau gradually slopes upward from the edge of the Sahara to the crest of a rugged north-south escarpment, the western Jebel also known as the Mountains of the Ksour, which overlooks two coastal plains, the Arad between Gabès and Medenine and further east the much wider Jeffara. The Jebel consists of several ranges, the Jebels Melab, Matmata and Demmer, each further broken up by the wadi valleys issuing forth from it, forming numerous rocky spurs. Consequently, there are numerous east-west routes following the wadis, making movement through the chain, from the Arad and Jeffara to the Dahar corridor and vice versa, relatively easy. In contrast, north-south progress along the Jebel is difficult, though not impossible as shown by the existence of modern tracks taking a similar course, and it is questionable whether such a tortuous and vulnerable route would have been used either for military communications or as a frontier road.¹³

The uncertainty surrounding both alternatives is intensified by the highly dubious equations proposed between the three intermediate road stations, *Augemmi*, *Agma* and *Ausilimdi*, and sites in the general region, such as the Late Roman fort *Benia bel-Recheb*. The main justification for these identifications would seem to be that the sites are substantial and well-known. However, *Benia bel-Recheb*, for example, was probably built half a century or more after the Itinerary was drawn up, making it an unlikely candidate for *Augemmi*.¹⁴

In fact there is no need to resort to such tenuous hypotheses; the course of the *Limes Tripolitanus* road is quite easy to establish. Two of the intermediate stations *Agma* and *Augemmi* are recorded elsewhere. *Agma* reappears in the Antonine Itinerary (59.7) as *Agma sive Villa Fulgurita*, between *Tacapae* and *Gigthis* on the route along the coast of Tripolitania. The site recurs in the Peutinger Table (Seg. VI.5) version of the same road simply as *Fulgurita*. It is quite likely that two sites lay close together, a village and a villa, probably at or in the neighbourhood of Zarat. The coastal road may consisted of two tracks in this area, one taking a slight detour inland via *Agma*, the other sticking closer to the coastline. *Augemmi* is surely the same place labeled *Augarmi* in the Peutinger Table (Seg. VII.1) where it is positioned on the road leading from Gabès south-south-eastward through *Mareth* (*Martae*) on a route diverging away

13. Louis 1975, 17-22 & 38, pl.II, for a useful summary description of the south-east Tunisia.

14. See Hammond 1967, 9-10 and Troussset 1974, 32-34 & site inventory, for the various equations proposed for *Ausilimdi*, *Agma* and *Augemmi*.

from the coastline. *Augarmi* and *Augemmi* should probably be identified with the site *Henchir Kedama*, a village complete with a substantial Late Roman fort, c. 15 km south-east of *Medenine*. On the basis of its name, *Augarmi/Augemmi* was probably the chief centre of the *Akhaemeneis*, a tribe situated by Ptolemy in north-western Tripolitania. Such prominence was doubtless achieved because *Henchir Kedama* was located at an important crossroads. The settlement lay c. 80 km south-east of *Tacapae* and 30 km south of *Gigthis*, at the point where roads from the two cities merged, the combined route then continuing southward to reach *Ghadames*, ultimately.¹⁵

These points may be used to reconstruct the Antonine Itinerary route. Having reached *Turris Tamalleni*, from *Gabès*, the track then virtually doubles back on itself, heading through *Bezereos* towards the coast, probably crossing the northern end of the *Jebel Matmata* before finally approaching the coast not far from *Mareth* and *Zarat*. In this area the coastal road and the *Tacapae-Martae-Augarmi* route lie close together. The *Limes Tripolitanus* itinerary joins the latter route but doubtless the road from *Turris Tamalleni* and *Bezereos* actually continued on the short distance necessary to link up with the coastal thoroughfare. Having reached *Augarmi*, meeting the road from *Gigthis*, the *limes* itinerary headed south either deviating via *Ras el-Ain* or following a straight course past *Tatahouine* (candidates for the site of *Talalati/Tabalati?*), then passing through *Henchir Medeina* (*Thebelami*) and *Remada* (*Tillibari*), before climbing the *Jebel* escarpment. The Antonine Itinerary route then turns south-east then east toward *Lepcis*. However, the origin of this track was surely to serve traffic to and from *Ghadames*. It is roughly the direction later followed by the *trik Rhadamsi*, the ancient caravan route to *Ghadames*. It formed the central axis linking the major centres of the *Phazanii* confederation and was perhaps followed by one of *Balbus'* columns during his Tripolitanian campaign.¹⁶

That the road follows this course is confirmed by the discovery of four milestones, the only examples known from the interior of western Tripolitania, other than those marking the way from *Tacape* to *Turris Tamalleni*. At *Henchir Zeuss*, 10 km south-east of *Mareth*, fragments of three milestones were discovered, one of which incorporated an inscription of

15. For *Henchir Kedama* see *Feuille* 1938-1940, 260-265 and *Trousset* 1974, 24, 36 & 144. For the identification of *Augarmi* with *Henchir Kedama* with *Augarmi* see *Feuille* 1938-1940, 264 and *Salama* 1951, 121 & map.

Mattingly 1984, 48 & 379, citing *Tissot* 1888, 694, favours *Ksar Koutine*, a large ancient settlement between *Mareth* and *Medenine*, as the site of *Augarmi* (he rejects the equation with *Augemmi*). *Koutine* was certainly an important site, as *Mattingly* stresses, and certainly merits consideration. However, if the equation of *Augarmi* with *Augemmi* is correct, *Hr Kedama* would accord better with the attested mileages in the Antonine Itinerary.

Yet another candidate for *Augarmi* - the extensive settlement of *Henchir Remadi* on the *trik Ghadamsi* - is supplied by *Donau* 1914, 615.

The *Akhaemeneis*: *Ptol. Geog.* IV iii 6, cf. IV vi 6; *Desanges* 1962, 75. The modern *Querghemma* may be descended from this group.

Cf. *Mattingly* 1984, 463-471 (with map at p.532 fig.5) for a survey of the Tripolitanian road network.

16. For the *trik Ghadamsi* see *Martel* 1965, I, 93-95. For *Balbus* and the *Phazanii* see VI.1.3.

probable Tetrarchic date. The second milestone site identified lay near the Oued Fessi/Tatahouine at Henchir Mehahir (between Henchir Kedama and Tatahouine). Unfortunately the inscription on the stone has been completely effaced.¹⁷

This reconstruction of the *Limes Tripolitanus* road partially resurrects that proposed by Tissot (1888, 702-707) and Le Boeuf (in Toutain 1903, 397-400). The reason why this scheme has previously met with little favour is most succinctly stated by Hammond (1967, 10) when discussing the location of *Agma*:¹⁸

There is no reason why *Agma* should have been on the coast, since that would double the road back on itself, divide the *Limes* and leave a large populated area outside the communications system. A site in the Gebel Matmata such as that on the Wadi Oum el-Abbes seems more likely, and would give maximum protection to the economically and strategically important area of the Gebel.

Hammond's apparently cogent objection is flawed because it makes a series of implicit assumptions regarding the function of the *Limes Tripolitanus* road. It is envisaged as a frontier road built along the edge of the province to bar access to Roman territory. The notion that roads could act as frontier barriers is highly dubious, especially with regard to North Africa where the distances were so vast and the troops so few. Nowhere is it more so than in this context. The road actually begins and ends at the major coastal cities. Thus Hammond's objection regarding the exclusion of part of the frontier zone could equally be leveled at the eastern section of the road which ends up at *Lepcis*! It is difficult to see what protection it afforded the most important city in the region. On the other hand the central section, between *Tillibari* and *Tentheos*, which is furthest from the sea, encloses and supposedly protects an interior that consists mostly of the parched steppeland of the wide Jeffara plain, largely uninhabited save perhaps for seasonal pastoralist tribes. It is difficult to imagine that an elaborate linear defensive system would be needed to protect a patch of arid scrub.

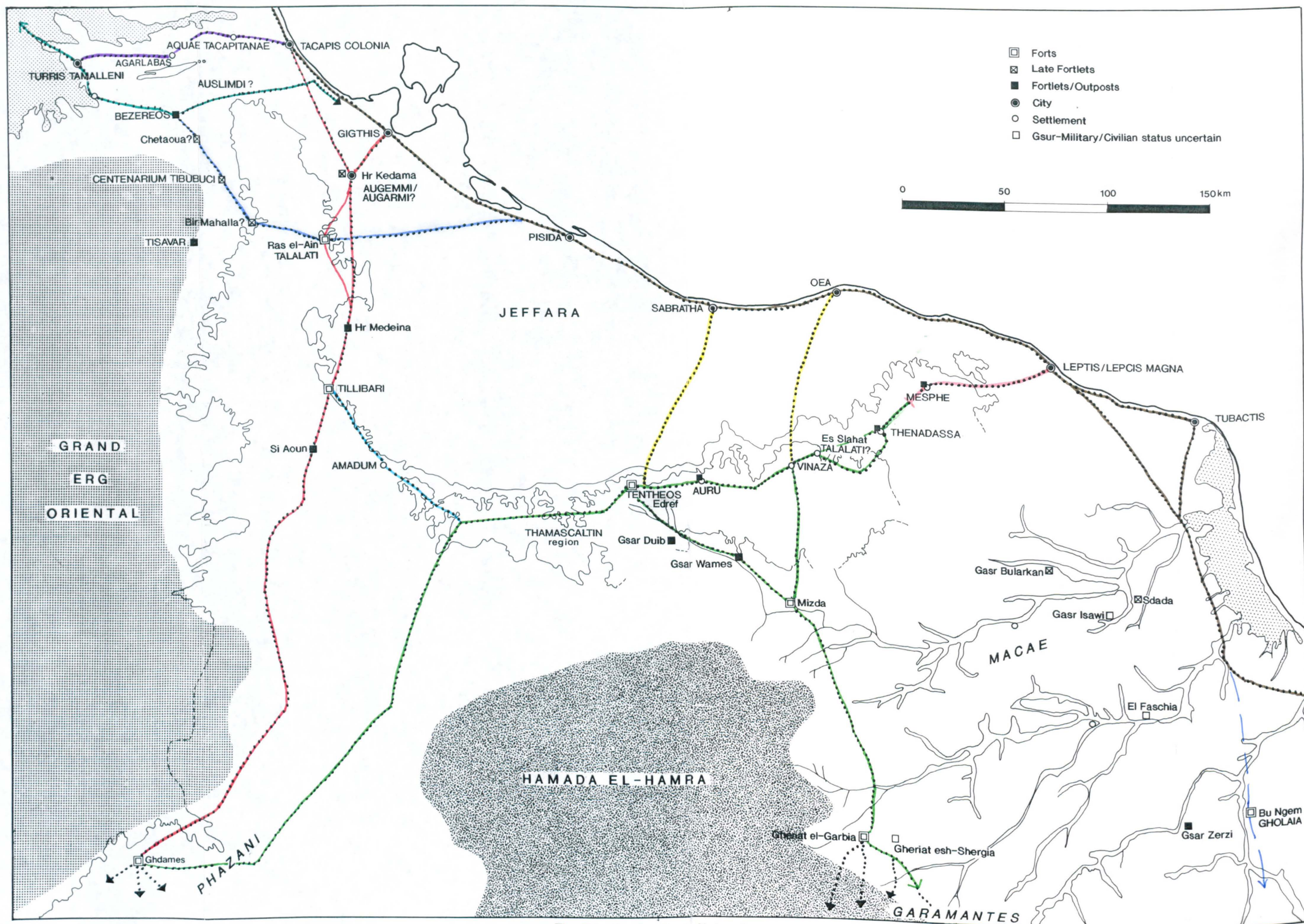
Secondly, although Hammond acknowledges it also formed part of the regional communications network he assumes that the *Limes Tripolitanus* road was the sole important element in that system. This is incorrect.

On the contrary it represented a journey or route (*iter*) **through** the Tripolitanian borderland - the probable meaning of *limes* in this context - and not a specific road. Map VII.2, which fits the western half of the *iter* into the road network

17. Cf. Donau 1914, 613-615 for the Henchir Zeuss milestones. For the Henchir Mehahir milestone see Toussaint 1906, 235 and Troussset, 1974, 105 (nr.118) & 144. The remains of a 'poste militaire' were also reported at the site.

Trousset's map of the organisation of the frontier zone in southern Tunisia (1980A, 932, fig.63.1), which roughly marks the position of these milestones, shows a slightly more direct course for this route taking the Tatahouine option but passing to the south and west of Henchir Kedama. It is not impossible that there was such a cut-off avoiding Augarmi (and perhaps Talalati = Ras el-Ain?) which was used by some through traffic, whereas the Antonine Itinerary route was intended to link the major sites in the region.

18. Cf. also Troussset 1974, 32: 'une vaste zone déjà pénétrée aurait été laissée en dehors du limes'.



The Tripolitanian Route Network

(Original in colour)

of western Tripolitania, shows how it made use of several different highways. The detour to *Turris Tamalleni* was indeed very pronounced, which is presumably why it was specifically mentioned in the route heading.¹⁹

The '*Limes Tripolitanus* road' was therefore a composite route, like so many laid out in the itineraries, encompassing several roads of differing dates of construction. The following constituent parts can be identified (map facing):

- 1.—The road from *Tacapae* inland to El Hamma (*Aquae Tacapitanae*). Built in AD 14 this route continued on to *Capsa* and ultimately the legionary base of *Ammaedara*.
- 2.—From *Aquae Tacapitanae* to *Turris Tamalleni* probably achieved during the Flavian dynasty.
- 3.—The southerly route from *Turris Tamalleni* via *Bezereos* to the coast, connecting *Gigthis* directly with the oases of the Nefzaoua area and ultimately by crossing the chotts with the Numidian military zone.
- 4.—From *Tacapae* and *Gigthis* south through *Augarmi/Augemmi* and *Tillibari* to Ghadames.
- 5.—The road built by the proconsul Aelius Lamia in AD 15/17 from *Lepcis Magna* out to the edge of the city's territorial hinterland ('*ab oppido in mediterraneum direxist m.p. XLIV*').²⁰
- 6.—A continuation of the above road, and similar territorial access routes from *Sabratha* and *Oea*, leading ultimately to Ghadames and the *Garamantes*.
- 7.—A short stretch from *Tillibari* to *Thramusdusim* (?) via *Dehibat* (*Ad Amadum?*), linking garrisons and settlements in the western and eastern halves of the Jebel range.

Thus reconstructed the meandering course of the *iter* makes it clear that these constituent roads only performed communications and logistics roles. They provided access to the interior, linking forts and garrisons but did not form a boundary or a frontier control line. The routes might be patrolled in certain rugged, bandit-infested areas but only to ensure the safety of soldiers, officials and civilians, travelling along them. Moreover it is reasonable to suppose that the frontier troops policed the districts around their bases in every direction and did not restrict their surveillance merely to these few roads. That this was so is confirmed by the location of police installations - walls barring mountain passes and fortlets sited at important waterpoints - throughout a very wide area. It is in this light that the *limites* listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* should be seen.

VII.2.2 The Bezereos - Ras el Ain (Dahar) route

19. See Isaac 1988 for the various meanings of *limes* esp. pp.128-130; cf. the Antonine Itinerary route heading (73, 4-6): *Item iter quod limitem Tripolitanum per Turrem Tamalleni a Tacapis Lepti Magna ducit*.

20. The territorial access road from *Lepcis* into the Gebel range: IRT 930 = AE 1936, 157 = AE 1940, 69, cf. Di Vita Eyrard 1979.

A further demonstration of these points is supplied by an examination of a secondary route in the frontier zone that from *Bezereos* to *Ras el Ain* via *Centenarium Tibubuci*. This has already been mentioned as one of the suggested routes of the *Limes Tripolitanus iter*. That option was rejected, but there is evidence that it represents a course used during the Roman period.

The fortlet of Ksar Tarcine, standing beside the Oued el-Hallouf, is well known as *Centenarium Tibubuci* by reason of the Diocletianic building dedication found at the site. Less celebrated because they have not produced inscriptions are two other *gsur* in this area, Ksar Chetaoua and Bir Mahalla. Ksar Chetaoua lies 25 km north west of Ksar Tarcine, on the right bank of the Oued el-Hallouf. It controls access to several wells cut in the bed of the wadi below. Bir Mahalla actually lies 400 m south-east of the well which gives the *gsur* its name just south of the Oued bel-Recheb. It is over 20 km distant from *Tibubuci* to the north west.²¹

There are good reasons for believing that these isolated sites were military structures, like *Tibubuci*, rather than civilian estate centres. All three lie at the northern end of the Dahar plateau, an area of rough grazing well to the west of the agricultural zone in the Jebel escarpment, the Arad and the northern Jeffara. Exploitation of the occasional flow of the Oued el-Hallouf might render agriculture around the sites viable, as in the pre-desert wadis further east, but a military role is more probable because of the similarity between Chetaoua, Mahalla and Ksar Tarcine, which was definitely an official site. In all three cases the tower-like *gsur* was closely surrounded by a substantial circuit wall. The resemblance was sufficiently striking to be commented upon by the French officers who first recorded the monuments, and implies that they form part of a single scheme. This can be credited to the reign of Diocletian on the basis of one of the governors named in the dedicatory slab from Tarcine.²²

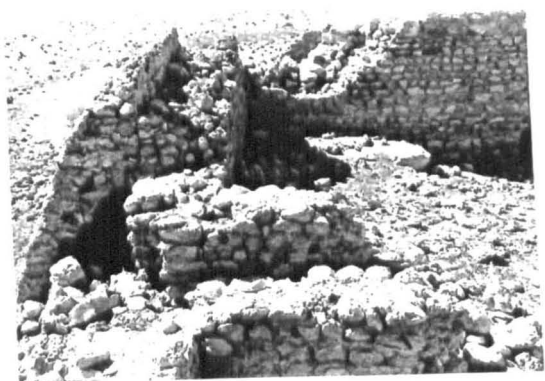
Once again, the temptation to see this string of posts as a frontier line should be resisted, or at any rate the nature of the frontier and the line carefully defined. The three fortlets were too small and too widely separated to act as a preclusive barrier. At *Centenarium Tibubuci* some estimate can be made of the size of the force stationed there. The ground floor of the *gsur* contains 22 stone troughs set against the north and east walls, suggesting it was designed to hold no more than that number of cavalrymen. Similar figures doubtless obtain for Chetaoua and Mahalla as well. Although the posts controlled important waterpoints and commanded extensive views a determined band of raiders could easily have

21. Ksar Tarcine: Troussset 1974, 90-92, Gauckler 1902; Ksar Chetaoua: Troussset 1974, 89; Bir Mahalla: Troussset 1974, 94-95. The building inscription from *Tibubuci*: *CIL VIII 22763 = ILS 9352*.

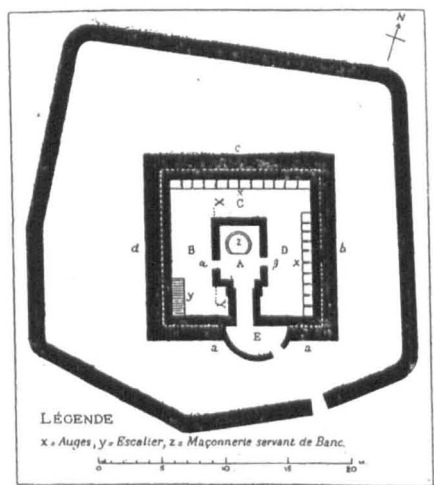
22. The governor is Aurelius Quintianus who also praeses of Numidia Cirtensis in 303; see Kolbe 1962, 53-55, Chastagnol 1967, 127-128 and Barnes 1982, 167-168 & 172.

A military role for Chetaoua and Mahalla was favoured by Mattingly (1984, 285), who is commendably cautious in such attributions.

DAHAR FORTLETS



Ksar Tarcine (after Troussel 1974)



Tarcine – plan (after Toutain 1903)



Tisavar (after Troussel 1974)

penetrated the 'line'. Not all the waterpoints in the area were directly overlooked, whilst advantage of good visibility no longer applied at night.²³

Instead, the chain was probably built to house troops watching over the route from *Bezereos* up the Oued el-Hallouf. A stretch of road surface was actually noted at the foot of the hillock of Bordj Zoumit on the left (west) bank of the wadi 2.5 km north-west of Ksar Chetaoua. Beyond Ksar Tarcine the route probably cut across country to join the Oued bel-Recheb near Bir Mahalla. From there it doubtless headed eastward, up the bel-Recheb, then up the Oued Skiffa (an affluent of the Recheb), and passed through the main Skiffa *clausura* to reach Ras el-Ain, linking up with the *Limes Tripolitanus iter*. Such a route would act as a 'short cut' linking the forces in Numidia with the units stationed in the Tripolitanian frontier zone without having to deviate via the coast as would be the case if the Antonine Itinerary *iter* was followed faithfully. Doubtless the route was in use long before the Tetrarchy but only then was it felt necessary to organise a system of protection along its course.²⁴

Once established, it may have been convenient to assign the Chetaoua, *Tibubuci* and Mahalla garrisons other tasks in addition to their primary role. As the outer screen of police stations at the northern end of the Dahar the three posts could serve as observation points, as bases from which patrols might be conducted and above all as points of contact with the military authorities for nomads moving northwards up the Dahar corridor. There the business of frontier control - oaths, passports and escorts - might be initiated, before the pastoralist tribes progressed onwards either through the *Tebaga clausura* to the Arad and the central Tunisian steppe or toward the Nefzaoua and the pasture north of the chotts.

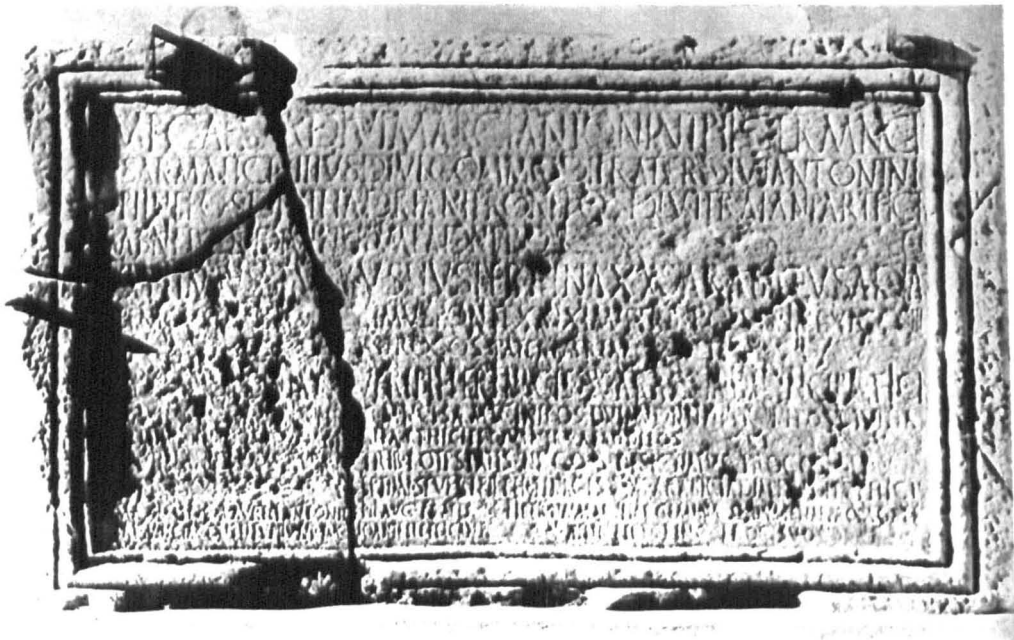
Construction of the three *centenaria* might explain the probable abandonment of the fortlet of *Tisavar* (Ksar Rhilane) c.30 km south west of *Tibubuci* on the edge of the Grand Erg Oriental. No coins later than the reign of Maximin Daia (309-313) have been found at *Tisavar*. Although this is not conclusive evidence of withdrawal from the outpost it does contrast noticeably with the coin sequence from *Tibubuci* which runs from Constantine to Eugenius (392-394). A few years use of the Oued el-Hallouf-Oued bel-Recheb posts may have shown that as well as protecting the *Bezereos-Talalati* road they could also provide sufficient accomodation for every policing requirement in the area, making *Tisavar* redundant.

VII.2.3 The Mauretanian Praetentura

23. For instance no military installation has yet been identified at the major well at Bir Soltane between Tarcine and Chetaoua. Some 'debris' is mentioned at the top of a nearby hill but Trouset (1974, 89) was of the opinion that it is not Roman in date.

24. The stretch of Roman road at Bordj Zoumit: Trouset 1974, 89, nr.95.

Hibernae alae Sebastenae



Dedicatory Inscription

(after Salama 1953)

One other frontier road must be considered. Unlike the *limes Tripolitanus* road the *Nova Praetentura* of Mauretania Caesariensis was designed more or less as a single entity. The label, *nova praetentura*, known from three milestones of 201 set up by the governor Aelius Peregrinus, signifies that the road formed an integral part of the army's redeployment southward under Septimius Severus. The title should perhaps best be understood as 'new forward deployment', the purpose of the road being to link up the units of the provincial garrison. It is noteworthy that it is always troops which are the subject of the parallel verb *praetendere* not forts or other structures.²⁵

The title thus belongs to the sphere of military strategy. It certainly implies the road was laid out along roughly the southern limits of directly administered territory. The label does not necessarily signify that the road's course demarcated the southern boundary of the province nor that the route was used as a line of frontier control on the ground, constantly patrolled to prevent all unauthorised crossing.

The few fortlets or watchtowers known along the route are widely spaced by the standards prevailing on Roman frontiers in Europe, and were probably intended to safeguard military communications. Any notion that troops stationed along the *praetentura* restricted their activities to patrolling the road is contradicted by the continued designation of forts as *hibernae* - winter quarters. This implies that Severan garrisons virtually abandoned their bases from late spring-autumn, operating throughout a wide sweep of territory, both southward across the high steppe and north into the mountains, in fact wherever a military presence was required. The possible existence of a *clausura* on the Kef Irhoud, about 5 km north of Ain Toukria, also suggests that frontier control was performed at whatever locations were topographically most suitable throughout the frontier zone, just as in Tripolitania.²⁶

Finally, it is clear from the work of Fort, Joly and later Salama, around *Columnata*, Tiaret and Aïoun Sbiba, the best recorded stretch of Severan frontier zone, that the *praetentura* did not always mark the limit of Romanised

25. The fundamental works on the Severan Mauretanian deployment are Salama 1953 & 1955 and Salama 1977. The course of the road west of Boghar is detailed by Albertini 1928, with amendment by Gauthier 1933; see also Salama 1951, (map), and Salama 1973. For earlier work see Demeaght 1892 and 1894, Derrien 1899, De Pachtere & Bouyssou 1912, Varnier & Fabre 1924, Gsell 1925. The route east of Boghar was studied by Massiera 1937, 1936-1937 and 1938-1940, Massiera & Megnin 1939.

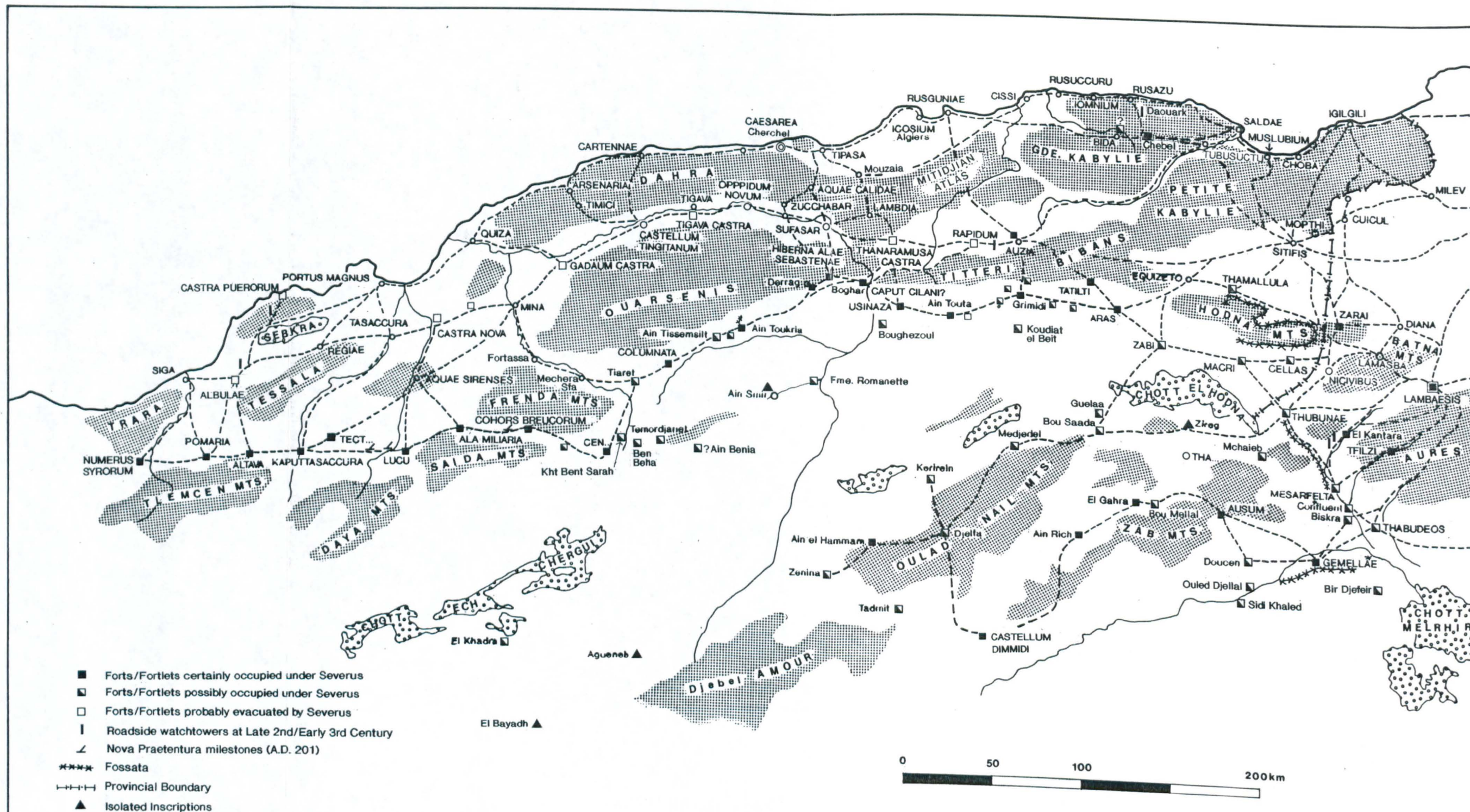
The milestones: (the emperors) '*miliaria novae praetenturae poni iusserunt*', *CIL VIII* 22602-22604 = *ILS* 5850, *CIL VIII* 22611, *BCH* 1919, p.CCXIV nr.1, and *Libya* 1955, 186; cf. Salama 1955, 358 & annexe 1, and Demeaght 1892.

For troops *praetendentes* see above II.3.1 and Wilkes 1977, 79.

26. *Hibernae*: the *hiberna alae Piaae Geminae Sebastenae* at Kherba des Ouled Hellal, west of Boghar, *AE* 1954, 143b, Salama 1953, 237-261, and *AAA* 23,35; the probable [*hiber*]na *coh(ortis) IV [Fl(aviae) Chalc]iden(orum)* at Tatilti, (mod. Tareass), Massiera 1936, 468-471.

The significance of the term *hiberna* in interpreting the role of the *praetentura* garrisons is discussed by Salama 1953, 253-261, see also 1984, 137.

The evidence for the Kef Irhoud *clausura* is set out in Appendix G.



Severan Military Deployment in Caesariensis and the Saharan Atlas
(after Salama 1953/1955, 1977)

settlement. Ancient farms and villages spread all over in the uppermost reaches of the Nahr-Ouassel and Mina, south and east of the known and projected road course, only petering out on the edge of the Sersou Plateau and the High Plateaux. It seems reasonable to assume that the inhabitants of these settlements were all provincial subjects, members of communities which had submitted to Severus' army at the beginning of the third century. The exact course of the road between Aïoun Sbiba (*Cen.*) and Tiaret is uncertain but it probably follows the Oued Mina. Two important sites, Kherbet Bent Sarah and Koudiat Sidi ben Beha, lie in this area and the road probably ran via one of them. Many earlier maps of Mauretania Caesariensis follow the arguments of Fort (1908B, 262-263) in showing an 'outer' route running from Aïoun Sbiba to Ain Tissemsilt or Ain Toukria, via a post at Temordjanet, and enclosing this entire region. There is no evidence for such a track, other than the assumption that the settlements noted above must have been sheltered behind a frontier road. Salama's more recent maps have dropped this route. Even the nature of the military post at Temordjanet is very uncertain.²⁷

The linear disposition adopted by the army of Caesariensis in the second and early third centuries was a straightforward response to the peculiar elongated geography of the province. Stationing most regiments along a single secure route meant that several units could fairly rapidly coalesce at any point along the line and then march north or south. The strict alternation of cavalry and infantry units, visible on the western sector of the *praetentura*, would have enabled the formation of mixed campaign forces of c. 1000-2000 men at any point along that stretch. One expedition mounted from a *praetentura* base can be identified in two late third century inscriptions recording the exploits of the governor Aurelius Litua and his troops. The *Ba(r)bari Transtagnenses* over whom victory was celebrated on a dedication at *Caesarea* may be equated with the *gentem Illem* (or *Iilemi*) on a similar inscription at *Columnata*. Litua probably led a punitive expedition south from *Columnata* against a tribe dwelling beyond the Chott ech Chergui or the two Zahrez chotts. To the citizens of the provincial metropolis, those tribesmen were remote and shadowy, the 'barbarians beyond the chotts', but to the population of *Columnata* the *gens* was all too real and had

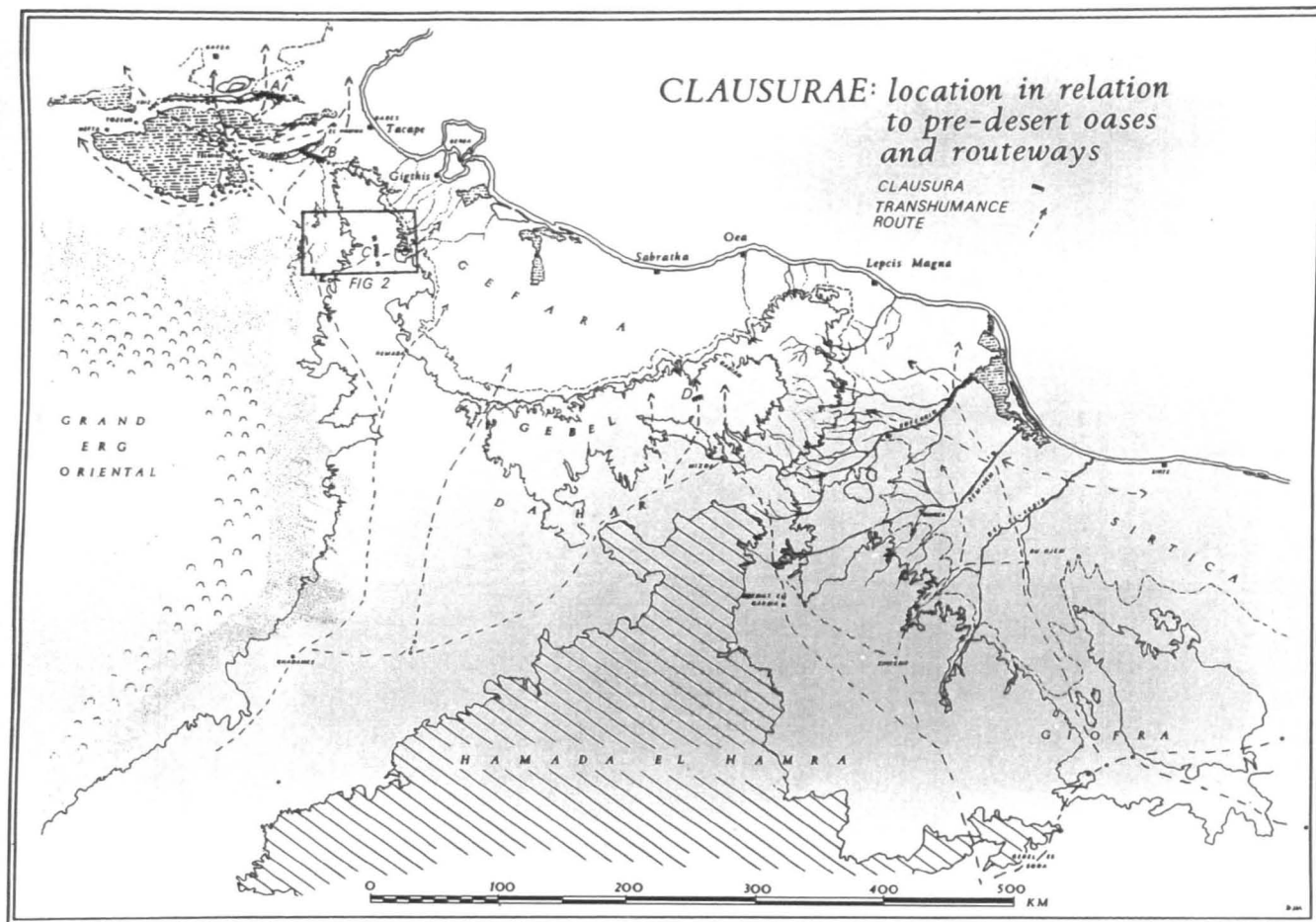
27. For settlement in upper Mina and Nahr Ouassel see *Atlas Archéologique* sheets 33 and 23; Fort 1908A and 1908B; Joly 1910, 394-395, 400-404; and Salama 1973, esp. 346-349 (gazeteer) & map.

Kherbet Bent Sarah: AAA 33,80 & add; Lawless 1970 II, 163 nr.60; Salama 1977, 585, 595 nr.31. Koudiat Sidi ben Beha: AAA 33,81 & add; Lawless 1970 II, 164 nr.61; Salama 1977, 585, 595 nr.30.

Maps showing 'the outer route': Salama 1951; Salama 1955; Benseddik 1980, 989.

More recent maps omitting the route: Benseddik 1982; Salama 1984, facing p.140; Salama 1986, 654 fig.16; Romanelli 1970. Even Fort later began to have doubts over the course of the road, see Albertini 1928, 46. For useful comments see Salama 1955A, 175-176, arguing against Albertini's 'boulevard militaire qui aurait matérialisé la limite méridionale de la province' and suggesting frontier organisation in this region was far more complex.

Temordjanet: AAA 33,130 (a military dedication and indeterminate ruins with some ashlar blocks); cf. Lawless 1970 II, 165 nr.62, and Salama 1977, 585, 595 nr.29.



(after Mattingly & Jones 1986)

a specific name, though not one which is very intelligible to us.²⁸

In the Later Roman period the *praetentura* forces were divided up between several *limites*. The most obvious are the *limes Columnatensis* south of the Ouarsenis, and the *limes Zabensis* in the Hodna Basin. In between these two lies Boghar, which I have earlier argued may represent *Caput Cilani*, centre of the *limes Caputcellensis*. In addition the *limes Audiensis* may have extended far enough south to incorporate some *praetentura* posts, such as Ain Grimidi. The stretches west of *Columnata* were probably covered by some of the commands with geographically indeterminate names, for example the *limes Augustensis* or the *limes inferioris*. There certainly appears to have been major reconstruction work at *Ala Miliaria*, perhaps during the tetrarchy.

This pattern may reflect some thinning out of the garrisons along the southern limits of the province, to release troops for internal policing following the unrest of the mid-late third century. Nevertheless the road clearly retained considerable strategic importance during Late Antiquity, emphasised by the fact that both the *limes Columnatensis* and the *limes Caputcellensis* were amongst the *Caesariensis* commands annexed by the *comes Africae*. At the start of Theodosius' campaign against Firmus, the *comes Romanus* was sent '*ad vigilias ordinandas et praetenturas*' (AM XXIX v 5), a possible reference to the *limitanei* stationed along the old military road. Romanus may have been instructed to prevent Firmus from receiving reinforcement from the nomads of the High Plateaux and Saharan Atlas, or perhaps to secure communications along that route for the movement of Roman field units from Numidia into Mauretania. Recurrence of the term *praetentura* in this context is surely more than a coincidence and suggests it remained part of African military vocabulary.²⁹

VII.3 LINEAR BARRIERS AND FRONTIER CONTROL, I: TRIPOLITANIA

VII.3.1 *Clausurae*

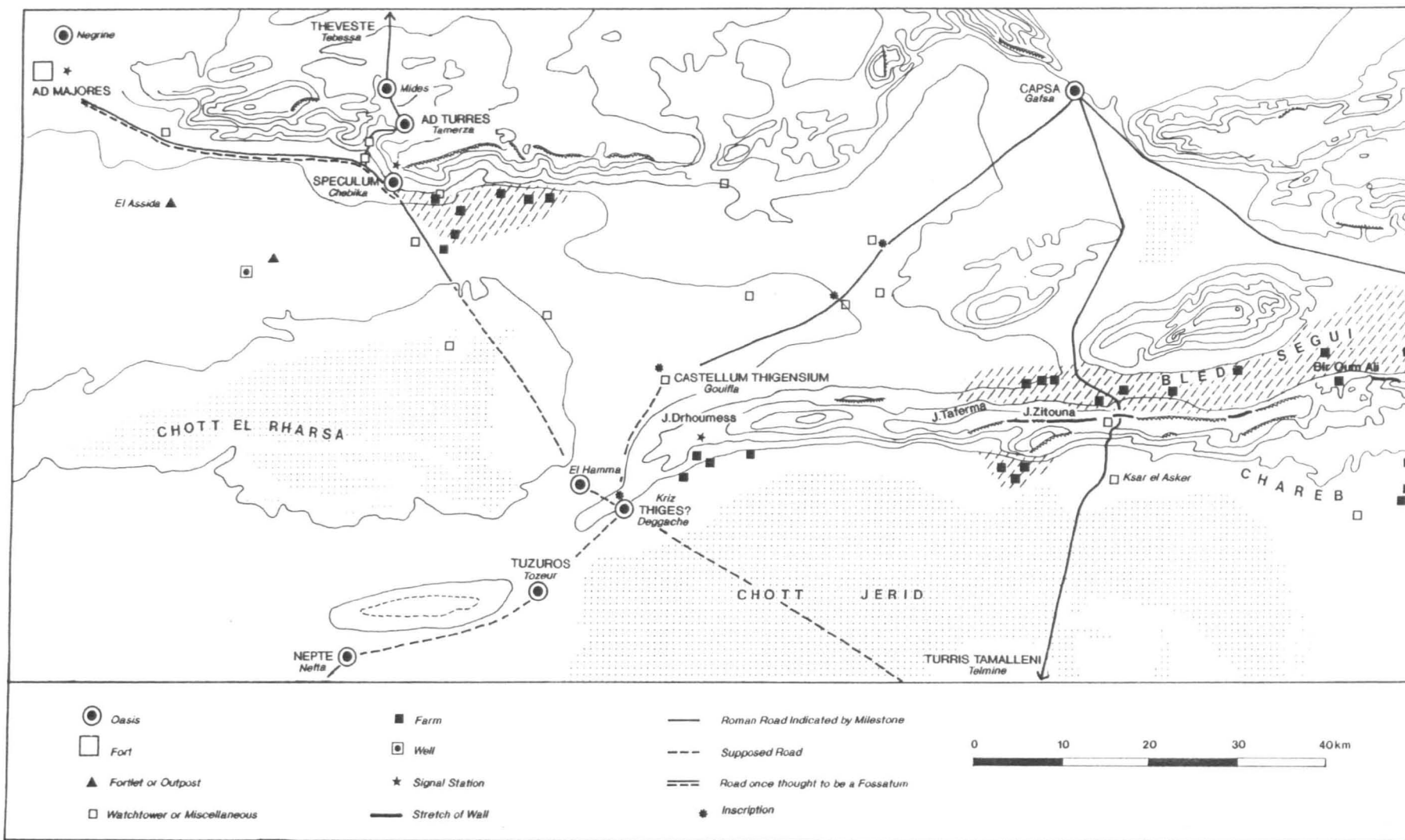
So far this analysis has concentrated on roads and their importance as communications links and supply routes, providing the basic strategic framework for the military zone. In contrast, their role as border lines has been dismissed as essentially mythical, a modern concept without relevance in Antiquity. To understand how frontier control was actually accomplished during the Late Empire it is necessary to examine

28. Lawless 1970 I, 93-99 and Mattingly 1984, 188-189 for discussion of why lateral deployment was adopted in *Caesariensis*.

Severan alternation of units: Salama 1977, 581-582 & 590-591. There is insufficient evidence for the central and eastern sectors.

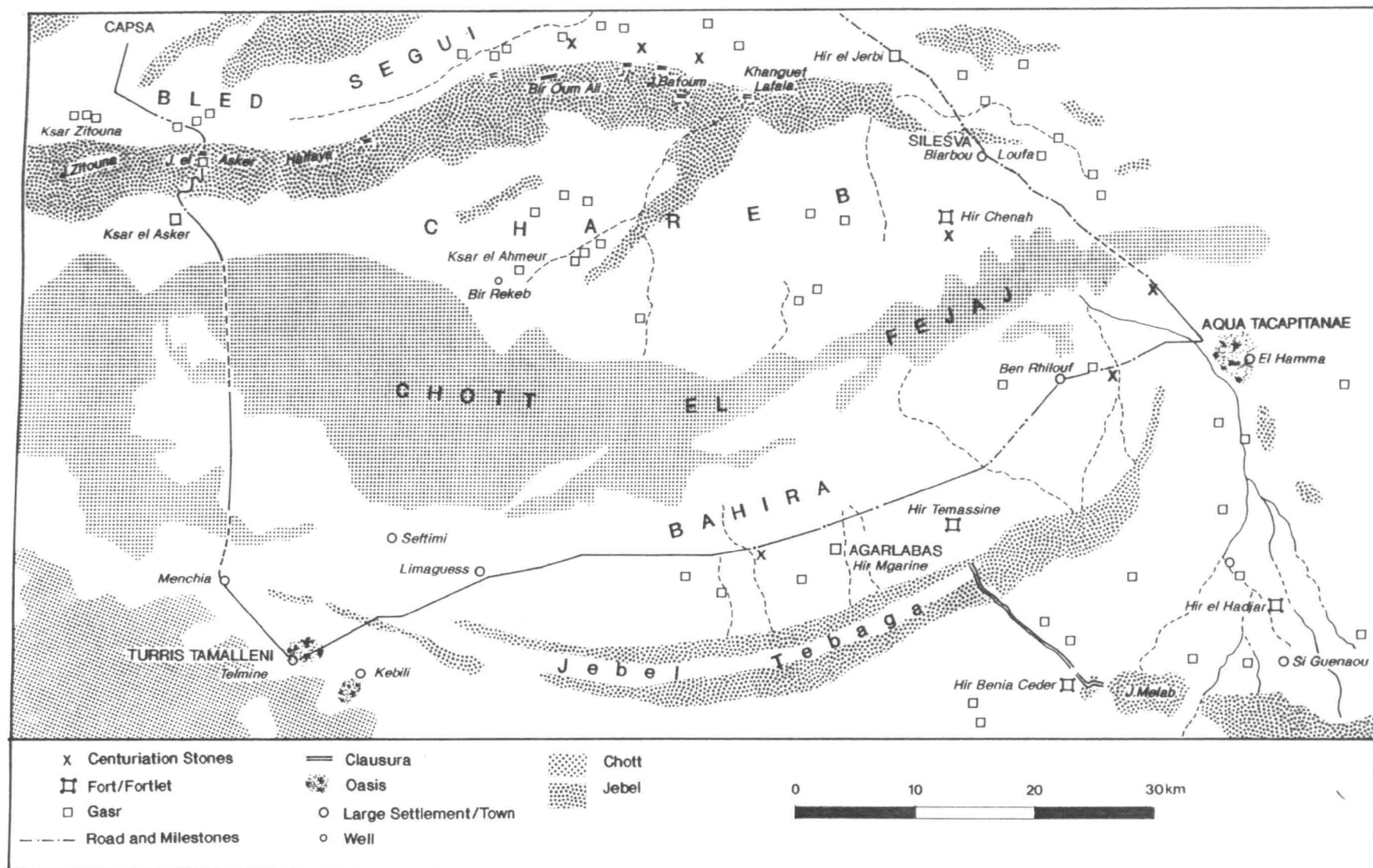
The *Ba(r)bari Transtagnenses*: CIL VIII 9324 (Caesarea). Litua at *Columnata*: Fabre & De Pachtere 1911, 561-563 = AE 1912, 24, and cf. now Akerraz & Rebuffat 1991, 396-398.

29. Ammianus does, however, use the term on another occasion, when describing frontier defences in Mesopotamia: XIV iii 2.



The Limes Montensis

(after Troussset 1978B)



The Chareb and Tebaga Clausurae

(after Troussset 1978)

a type of structure typical of the region, the so-called *clausura* or valley blocking wall. These have been the subject of much study in the past two decades, most notably by Troussel.³⁰

The Chareb Series

The inclusion of a *praepositus limitis Montensis in castris [N]eptitanis* amongst the frontier commands listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* has always been a little puzzling. The terrain around *Nepte* (mod. Nefta) could scarcely be described as mountainous. Baradez (1949, 142-144) argued the *limes* included the area directly north of *Nepte* beyond the Chott el-Rharsa. There, he had recognised a length of *fossatum* running along the foot of a chain of hills between *Ad Maiores* and *Speculum* (Chebika). It is quite likely that this area did fall under the authority of the *Nepte* command, but Troussel has demonstrated convincingly that the length of *fossatum* was more probably just part of the road leading from Numidia via *Ad Maiores* towards Tripolitania. It is more likely that the mountains of the 'mountain frontier command' are represented by the long range, known as the Chareb or Cherb, which lies north of the Chotts Jêrid and el-Fejaj. It runs from the Jebel Drhoumess, overlooking the Jêrid oases, to the Jebel es-Stah, dominating the *Capsa-Tacapae* road. At least ten separate *clausurae* have been identified in this escarpment, the most important being the well-preserved example in the defile of Bir Oum Ali, and that situated in the Jebel el-Asker, barring the main route between *Capsa* and *Turris Tamalleni*.³¹

There are sound reasons why this system should be controlled from *Nepte* rather than *Turris Tamalleni* which was closer but lay south of the Chott el Fejaj. In winter the routes across the chotts were unsafe and communications between Tripolitania and Numidia must have followed either the *Tacapae-Capsa* road or the track round the south side of the Chott el Jêrid and along the corridor between that salt marsh and the Chott el Rharsa to reach the Trajanic road south of the Aurès. *Nepte* was the gateway to the Jêrid corridor, being the most south-

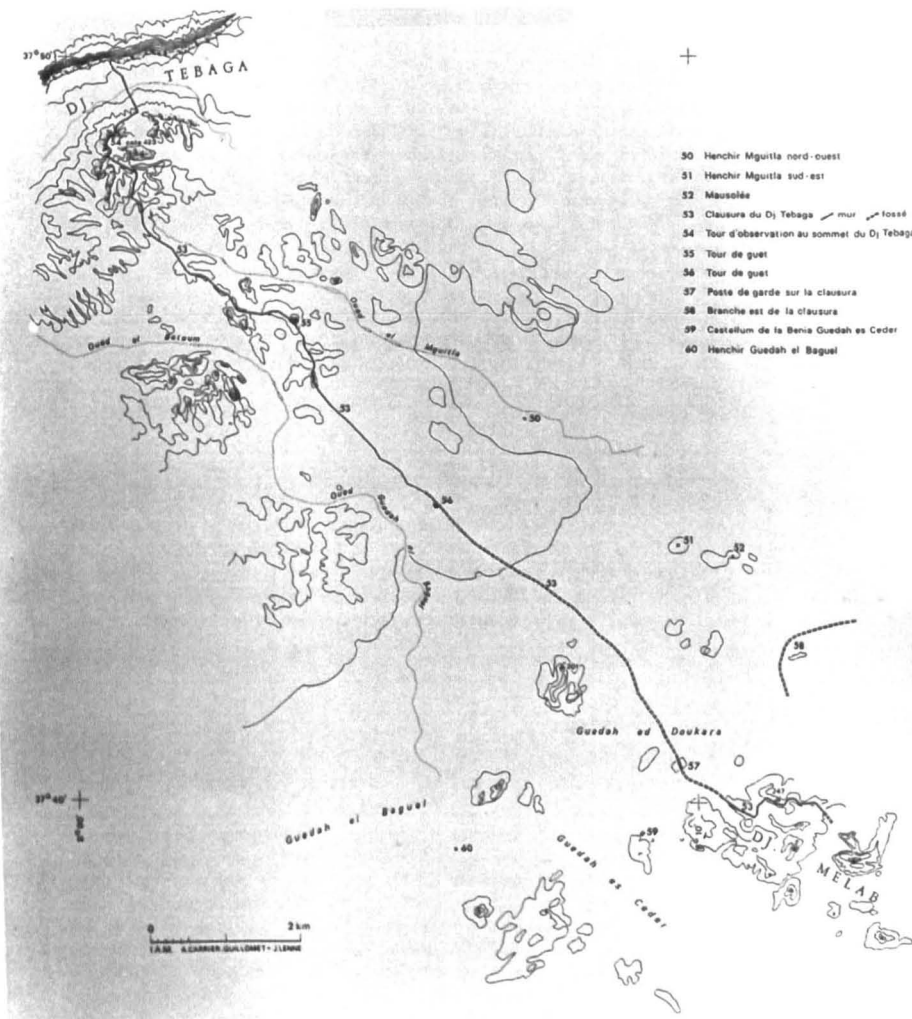
30. The key paper is Troussel 1984B; his 1974 and 1978A works are also invaluable. Cf. also Mattingly 1984, 290-298, Mattingly & Jones 1986 and Daniels 1987.

Napoli & Rebuffat 1983, for an exhaustive discussion of the problems inherent in using the term *clausura*. It seems to designate fortifications in mountain defiles. It would therefore cover valley blocking walls, but could equally have designated forts in similar positions. Its use has been retained here for the simple reason that suggested Latin alternatives, such as *propugnaculum* (Troussel 1974, 62-67, 97, 138-141 and 1984, 398 n.48), have found even less acceptance (cf. Rebuffat 1984). Modern titles involve more than one word, for example 'linear barrier', 'valley blocking wall' etc. For a succinct summary of this debate so far see Mattingly & Jones 1986, 87.

For possible North African *clausurae* outside Tripolitania: Baradez 1949, 129, mentioning but not illustrating one attached to the Guerguit Rmla escarpment, blocking the valley of the Oued Ouezzer on the southern edge of the Nementchas (see Appendix O); Appendix G, for a Mauretanian example.

31. For a fuller assessment of these linear works see Troussel 1984B, 383-385, also Troussel 1978A, 168-169 & fig.1 and 1978B 24 (fig.2) for a detailed map, together, showing all the barriers, and Mattingly 1984, 291-293 & 563 fig.36. Their date of construction is still uncertain. Troussel has suggested a Trajanic date but this would be unparalleled. They need not of course be contemporary but might represent piecemeal augmentation over a considerable period.

TEBAGA BARRIER



(after Troussset 1974)



Looking North-West from the Gateway (Map nr. 57)

westerly of a string of oases. Troops stationed there were doubtless responsible for protecting travellers using the Jérid detour. Furthermore, that base could maintain all year round contact with the *clausurae*, permitting much easier inspection of the structures in spring to check whether repairs were necessary before the chott crossings became passable once more and transhumant migration resumed. *Nepte* therefore was the logical centre for a military command covering the area north and west of the chotts, playing a corresponding role to *Turris Tamalleni* south and east of the salt marshes.³²

This hypothesis, if it is correct, would imply the chain of linear barriers was still functioning at the end of the fourth century. Its retention reveals the depth of the area over which control of movement was maintained.

Tebaga

Further south the longest of the Tripolitanian linear barriers closes the gap between the east-west ridge, the Jebel Tebaga and the Jebel Melab, the northernmost remnant of the Jebel range. It consists of a 17 km long wall or ditch and banking and was provided with a towered gateway and three watchtowers along its length. A kilometre south-west of the gateway lies Benia Guedah Ceder, a small fort of the *quadriburgium* type. The barrier controls access from the northern end of the Dahar to the Arad and the El-Hamma plain, which in turn stands on the threshold of the Tunisian Sahel.³³

Demmer

The third complex of structures of this type is located in the Jebel Demmer. Four stretches of *clausura* walling have been discovered so far in defiles through this range, from Chenini in the south to the Oued Zraia in the north. In between lie two walls barring the main Oued Skiffa passage and a southern tributary. Further north still, in the valley of the Oued bel-Recheb, yet another example has been identified by Mattingly and Jones (1986, 92-94), on the basis of a report by a French army officer early this century. Not all these walls were equipped with gateways suggesting that some were designed to block off minor routes and channel traffic towards a few passages to simplify the process of frontier control. Thus the recently discovered Skiffa South barrier, discussed by Jones & Mattingly (1986), where no gateway can be identified, was probably intended to divert traffic towards the main Skiffa *clausura* which was definitely furnished with one.³⁴

Hadd Hajar

32. For a full discussion of the chott crossings in antiquity see Troussset 1982 and cf. also Troussset 1986B.

33. The Tebaga *clausura* Troussset 1974, 62-68, nrs.53-59; Troussset 1984B, 385-388 and Mattingly 1984, 294-295 & esp. 568 fig.41 for a resurvey of the gateway.

34. The Demmer *clausurae*: Troussset 1974, 97 & 102, nrs.106-107 & 111; Troussset 1984B, 387-388, Mattingly 1984, 295-297, 438; Mattingly & Jones 1986, citing Hilaire 1901 for the Oued bel-Recheb *clausura*.

HADD HAJAR

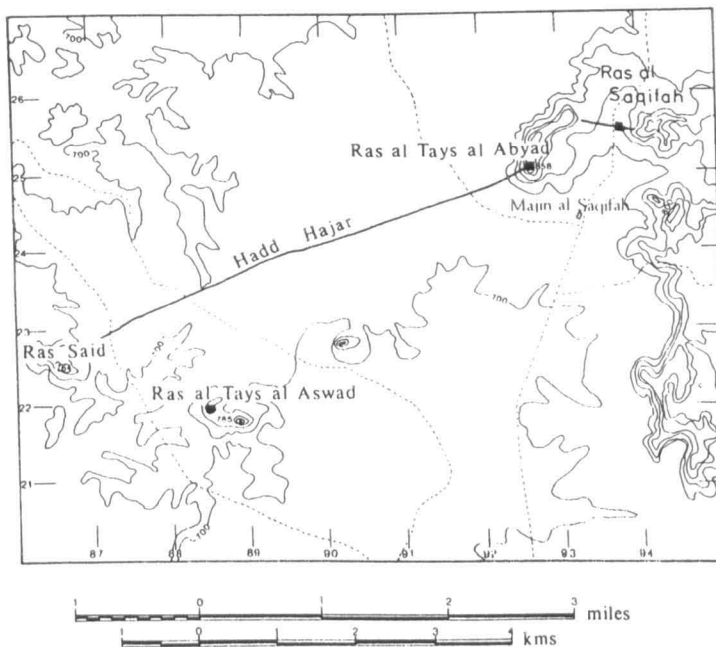


Plate I. Hadd Hajar, looking south-west from Watchtower 1 on Ras al Tays al Abyad. Top left, Ras al Tays al Aswad. (Peter Holmes)

(after Brogan 1979-1980)

The final linear barrier system, known as Hadd Hajar ('the wall of stone'), is to be found much further east in the Gebel Garian of Libyan Tripolitania. Twenty kilometres south of Asabaa a 6 km long wall bars a broad valley, directing traffic towards a gateway (Gasr al Saqifah) in a second, much shorter, stretch of wall inserted between two hills, Ras al Tays al Abyad and Ras al Saqifah. Three watchtowers overlook the walls, monitoring their approaches. One of these towers has produced Late Roman pottery, perhaps indicating the system was still in operation in the period under consideration here. Of equal interest is the presence of a large cistern, Majin al Saqifah, two kilometres south of the gateway, doubtless constructed to water those awaiting passage through the barrier.³⁵

It was not only the Hadd Hajar which was associated with watchtowers on the surrounding heights. This feature was common to all the groups of *clausurae*. For example, of the four certain walls in the Demmer range all except the Skiffa South barrier were overlooked by towers. The use of such towers would have extended the visibility of the small squads stationed at the barriers and perhaps enable them to signal to their supporting bases, Ras el-Ain and Benia bel Recheb. This underlines the point that the *clausurae* were only one element of a widespread military infrastructure, consisting of forts, roads and watchtowers. The role of these linear structures cannot therefore be properly understood unless they are considered in relation to other military installations, in particular the forts and fortlets, whose location reveals where most soldiers were actually quartered.³⁶

VII.3.2 Forts and Fortlets

The Demmer *clausurae* may serve as a useful case study. Two forts lie sufficiently near to these barriers to be associated with their operation, Ras el-Ain and Benia bel-Recheb. It is noteworthy that neither fort was sited right on the *clausurae*, but lay 10-20 km to the rear (eastward). Their positions roughly corresponded; Ras el-Ain lay towards the southern end

35. For Hadd Hajar see Brogan 1979-1980, Troussset 1984B, 388, Mattingly 1984, 297-298, 567 fig.40 & especially 435 nn.60-61 for notification of the third watchtower discovered by D. Buck in 1981.

Note Saqifah (= Skiffa) signifies corridor in Arabic.

36. Watchtowers in the Jebel Demmer: Troussset 1974 and esp. Mattingly 1984, 296 & 438, for a careful distinction between military and civilian agricultural sites; cf. also Troussset 1990, esp. 274 fig.4. For the watchtowers attached to the other series of *clausurae* see, for example, Troussset 1974, 63-65 (Tebaga). Troussset 1990, comprehensively studies this type of structure in North Africa. For their possible use as signal stations see Rebuffat 1978 and Troussset 1990. The case for their use in the latter fashion is strengthened by the existence of towers on peaks such as the Jebel Tlalett overlooking Fom Tatahouine and visible from Ras el-Ain, Mergueb ed Diab above Bezereos or Mzezzen above Benia bel-Recheb. However these 3 towers may simply have been intended to extend the eyesight of their respective nearby garrisons so some scepticism is merited.

THE DEMMER CLAUSURAE

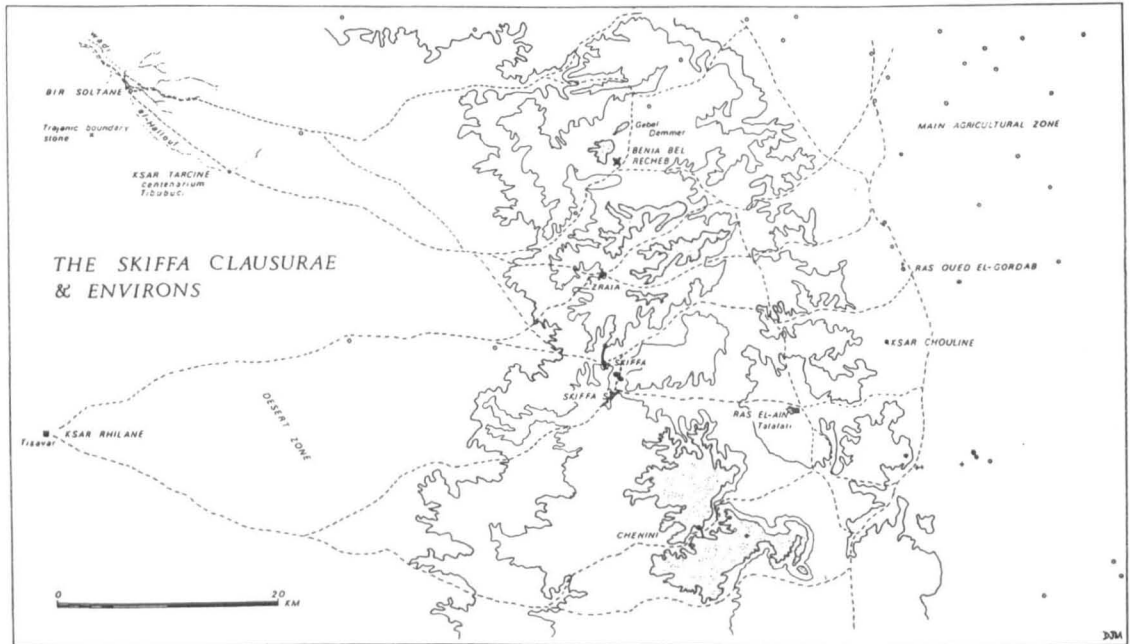


Figure 2. The Skiffa group of clausurae in the Gebel Demmer. The new example is marked 'Skiffa South'. Open symbols denote Roman period farms, half-filled symbols are fortified farms and solid symbols are military sites.

(after Mattingly & Jones 1986)



Zraia Barrier

(after Troussset 1984B)

of the chain of barriers, whilst Benia bel-Recheb was situated to the north.³⁷

Along with the Demmer *clausurae* and their associated watchtowers both these forts probably fell within the area of a single frontier command, the *limes Talalatensis*. As we have seen in section VI.4.1 the forts occupy very different positions in the site hierarchy of that military district. At just under a hectare in size the third century foundation, Ras el-Ain, probably served as the headquarters of the *limes*, housing most of the forces assigned to the command. Recheb on the other hand was a much less important addition to the district's infrastructure, a small post built to provide closer support for the troops operating the northernmost *clausurae*, which were over 20 km from Ras el-Ain. Two conclusions may be drawn from this analysis.

Firstly, the different date of the two forts underlines the piecemeal development of military infrastructure in the frontier zone. It is not inconceivable that the construction of the Demmer walls themselves was a gradual *ad hoc* process mirroring that of the nearby bases. Each might form a local response to a particular requirement rather than the individual components of an overall masterplan.

Secondly, the small size of most of the posts supporting the Tripolitanian *clausurae*, which Benia bel Recheb typifies, and the fact that they lay some distance to the rear, suggests that the barriers were not designed to repel a barbarian assault. Admittedly Benia Guedah Ceder lay only a kilometre from the gateway through the Tebaga barrier and was larger than Recheb. However, at 0.27 hectares it was scarcely huge. It is difficult to believe it could have housed much more than a hundred men, probably less.

This impression is reinforced by the fact that there was no attempt to modernise the defences of the older forts, despite their importance as regional headquarters. Periodic repair programmes, such as that recorded by inscriptions at Ras el-Ain between 355-360, would have presented ample opportunity for a defensive overhaul. This should urge a degree of caution regarding the intensity of the threat faced by the Roman forces in the fourth century. The isolated, late posts with their small garrisons would of course have been more vulnerable to attack than the principal bases, but the main reason the new forts incorporated projecting towers and single gateways was surely simply because it was the current style of military architecture. It was natural that any new, as opposed to restored, post would be built in that form. Their visual aspect, featuring multiple towers even at very small sites, may itself have served a purpose by projecting an impressive image of the power and might of Rome towards the population of the frontier zone. In other words, they were not the fourth century counterparts of medieval castles. On

37. The Demmer *clausurae* supporting forts see VI.4.1: for Ras el-Ain see Troussset 1974, 98-102 nr.109, Mattingly 1984, 266-267; for Benia bel Recheb see Troussset 1974, 95-96, nr.105, Mattingly 1984, 271 & 555, fig.28.

the contrary, they should be interpreted as outlying police stations. At most they were equipped to protect their garrisons against a surprise raid but not to sustain a prolonged siege. If this was true of the forts it is likely to have applied with even greater force to the *clausurae*. Clearly therefore a different explanation of the latter's function must be sought.³⁸

VII.3.3 Discussion: Transhumance and Frontier Policing

All those who have discussed the *clausurae* in recent years, most notably Troussset but also Mattingly, Rebuffat and Daniels, are agreed in relating these structures to the phenomenon of transhumance.³⁹ Seasonal transhumance was doubtless a prominent feature of the Tripolitanian frontier zone in Antiquity just as it has been more recently. If the ancient pattern foreshadowed that of the modern era one should envisage tribes, some originating as far south as the area around Ghadames or beyond, moving northwards along the El-Uaasa and Dahar corridors in search of summer grazing. This could be obtained in the Jeffara and the Arad plains and the Nefzaoua. If the rains were less abundant the nomads might have to push onward across the chotts to find pasture in the Chareb, the Bled Segui or further still beyond Gafsa onto the steppe around *Thelepte*, *Cillium* (Kasserine), and *Sufetula*, in the centre of Byzacena. In addition there may well have been pastoral movement over much shorter distances by segments of the sedentary population of the frontier zone, building up into a very complex pattern of intersecting migration.⁴⁰

The regular appearance of semi-nomadic tribesmen on the grazing of the Jeffara might explain how Bishop Aurelius of Carthage, at the African church council of 397, could state that barbarian tribes lay between the bishoprics of Tripolitania and Arzugitana. It is readily apparent how the geography of Tripolitania might facilitate such a state of affairs. The Jeffara plain receives little rainfall (less than 200 mm per annum). As a result it was largely devoid of permanent settlement except on its rim and thus formed a wide glacis between the two subdivisions of the province, the coastal district of Subventana, or Tripolitania proper, and Arzugitana, the frontier zone of the Jebel range and the pre-desert wadis. The Jeffara may also have tended to create an east-west division of Tripolitania as well as a north-south one (see below).⁴¹

38. Cf. Pringle's comments on the low technical capacity of Moorish tribes in siege warfare (1981, 132, 147-158). The massive Justinianic building programme for all its impressive nature did not produce 'state of the art' fortifications nor was it intended to do so.

39. See, notably, Troussset 1980A and 1984B, Mattingly 1984, Mattingly & Jones 1986, Rebuffat 1982B, Daniels 1987, and forthcoming.

40. For a survey of transhumance and sedentary settlement in Tripolitania during the recent historical period, and its implications for corresponding economic modes in Antiquity see Mattingly 1984, 103-110.

41. Bishop Aurelius' statement at the Council of Carthage in 397 is cited by Ward Perkins & Goodchild 1953, 3 and Romanelli 1926, 155-166 (Mansi 1901, col.886, xxxix). The presence of the barbarians rendered impractical a suggestion that 12 bishops should be present to ordain a new bishop: '*propterea quia et in Tripoli forte et in Arzuge interiacere videntur barbarae gentes: nam in Tripoli (ut asseritur) episcopi*

The literary sources show that the nomads were viewed by fourth-fifth century North African landowners and bishops as outsiders - 'barbari', an external and therefore potentially unstable element within the frontier zone. This opinion was presumably shared by the military commanders in the region.

Nevertheless it is now clear that the *clausurae* were not defensive or defensible structures. The gateways and associated watchtowers could only have accommodated handfuls of soldiers, insufficient to deal with even the smallest band of raiders. The forts housing the supporting garrisons were set too far to the rear. Obviously these structures could not exclude pastoralist groups from the agricultural zone altogether.

Equally clearly they do not represent any sort of frontier line. As we have seen there are military outposts well to the west of the Demmer *clausura*, along the Chetaoua-Tibubuci-Mahalla route for example. Mattingly & Jones (1986, 94) have underlined this point which of course applies with even greater force to the Tebaga *clausura* and the group north of the chotts:

The location of the *clausurae* is of interest in that they lie not on an exact frontier line and many are well-withdrawn from the known, maximum, limits of the province. But they all seem to occur at topographic points where there is a rapid transition from a pre-desert pastoral zone into an area where there was a much higher density of sedentary settlement in Roman times.

It might also be added that *clausurae* can only function effectively in terrain which is sufficiently rugged to restrict circulation to a limited number of routes. Such relief also tends to produce the conditions which allow agricultural cultivation. Rainfall, however low, falling over the massifs can be exploited to concentrate relatively large volumes of water in locations where it can be exploited - wadi beds, hill-slope terraces or horsetail systems in the plains below. The topographical relationship that Mattingly perceives may therefore be partly coincidental. The Tebaga *clausura* bisects a zone of farms and agricultural systems. The group in the Chareb escarpment lie between two strips of flat cultivable land the Bled Segui and the Chareb plain, both of which were centuriated and farmed. The *clausurae* do not

sunt quinque tantummodo'. There were only 5 episcopal sees in Tripolitania proper so bishops from the neighbouring frontier zone would have had to attend every ordination to form a quorum. The presence of the barbarians made this impossible at any rate in the eyes of a man from the civilised core of the African diocese.

That Subventana and the regio Arzugum were both districts of Tripolitania is demonstrated by Orosius (I ii 90) but in the same passage that historian seems to indicate that the Arzuges had a wider application as a label given to the population of the entire African frontier zone: 'Tripolitania provincia quae et Subventana vel regio Arzugum dicitur, ubi Leptis Magna civitas est, quamvis Arzuges per longum Africae limitem vocentur'. According to St Augustine the Arzuges had good claim to be the most southerly Christian community (Ep. 93).

The best discussions of the Arzuges and Arzugitana are Goodchild 1950, 30-31 = 1976, 35-37 and Mattingly 1984, 96-97; cf. also Romanelli 1926, Courtois 1955, 93-95, Desanges 1962, 77-80, Lancel 1964, 141 and Brogan 1975, 280-281. Cf. above IV.2.2 n.24 for the possible origin of the label and Le Bohec 1989C, 202-203 for the earliest evidence.

entirely screen the agricultural zones and their precise location is an opportunistic response to topographic conditions.

They were designed to monitor and police transhumance. As the wave of people and livestock moved up the Dahar every spring troops housed in forts such as Ras el-Ain would be outposted to the *clausurae*. Whilst some pastoralist groups would push on northwards others would leave the plateau, descending through the Jebel Demmer to find pasture on the northern and western Jeffara. During their stay they might gain employment as harvesters and crop-watchers amongst the agricultural communities of the Jebel and the Jeffaran margin. The troops stationed at the Demmer *clausurae* could control access to the plains. Further north where the pattern of transhumant movement began to fan out, clans attempting to reach the northern Arad or the El-Hamma plain leading to the Tunisian Sahel would have to pass through the gap between Jebel Tebaga and the Jebel Melab, the northern terminal of the Matmata range. There they would be confronted by a long wall or ditch and banking, enforcing passage through a single gateway. The absence of similar structures filtering the traffic using the routes through the intervening Jebel Matmata and thereby regulating access to the Arad is difficult to explain. There is a strong possibility that *clausurae* once existed in this range, having either been obliterated by later agriculture or have yet to be found.

Doubtless the *clausurae* were erected in part to provide customs control - taxes may have been levied on nomads' herds - but more especially they helped impose imperial authority and provide the army with information on exactly who was going where. A very useful parallel would be that of a modern police road-block. There is no reason to think they were manned permanently, simply when necessary. The ungated barriers built across some defiles reduced the number that had to be manned. The military presence at the remaining gated or unwall passes would have compelled the nomadic leadership to meet Roman officers before they could make further progress. By the process of oath-swearing outlined in the literary sources these chieftains could be made accountable for the behaviour of all the individuals in their band, and in effect be compelled to police their own kinsmen for the Romans. On the other hand if the pastoralists tried to ignore the barriers and force a passage through, easy enough in itself, they placed themselves outside the law and risked the army's retribution. Small groups could doubtless slip through the mountains but if they should be discovered without the letters of passage issued by army officers at the *clausurae*, or at the local headquarters, they would plainly be branded as bandits or spies. This was perhaps the fate of Stachao, a chieftain of the *Austuriani* whose execution on a charge of spying it was, according to Ammianus, that provoked the serious raids launched against Tripolitania during the reign of Valentinian. In short these structures helped to enforce the recognition of imperial jurisdiction.⁴²

42. For the levying of customs tolls further west in Numidia and Sitifensis see above section VII.1.4.

The forts similarly fit into this system. Thus the fortlets built during the Late Empire were clustered in a band in north-west Tripolitania between Henchir Chenah at the eastern end of the Chareb chain and Henchir Rjijila near the Oued Fessi in the western Jeffara, with a couple further east in the predesert basin of the Wadi Sofeggin and a southern outlier at the small oasis of Chawan in the El Uaasa corridor leading to Ghadames. Several lie close to the barriers. Others were positioned along roads in the Jeffaran margin, the Arad and the El Hamma plain, serving both to protect communications and police the zone where disputes between farmers and the pastoralist tribes would have been most common. One fortlet, for example, stands in the midst of the settlement at Henchir Kedama, which may possibly be identified with the major crossroads site, *Augarmi*. Ksar Tabria lies at the point where the Dahar gives way to the Nefzaoua oases and would have served to screen the sedentary communities of the latter, acting as a base for patrols in a flat landscape where the construction of a *clausura* was presumably considered unnecessary. At the opposite end of the Dahar corridor Rebuffat (1972, 323) has signalled the presence of a rectangular fortlet, built with projecting towers in the Late Roman fashion, at Chawan, one of the minor oases north-west of Ghadames. The description, although summary, accords well with the suggestion that it was a military post of the fourth century. Its garrison would doubtless have maintained surveillance over the southern part of the transhumant axis, and perhaps served to remind the *Cidamensii* of their treaty obligations.⁴³

The large number of late fortlets suggests a steadily increasing emphasis on the importance of policing the Tripolitanian frontier zone during the Late Empire. This trend was already apparent in the third century with the construction of posts such as Gasr Duib under Philip, Gasr Wames and even the fort of Ras el-Ain. It was more pronounced in western Tripolitania than in the eastern half of the province, a curious emphasis given the rise of the Laguatan confederation which might have been expected to shift the focus of concern toward the south-east, from where this threat is thought to have originated. Part of the explanation for why so much attention was lavished on the western axis may be the length of this transhumant corridor, with its capacity to reach regions deep in the heart of Roman Africa, doubtless considered to be of far greater importance than impoverished Tripolitania.⁴⁴

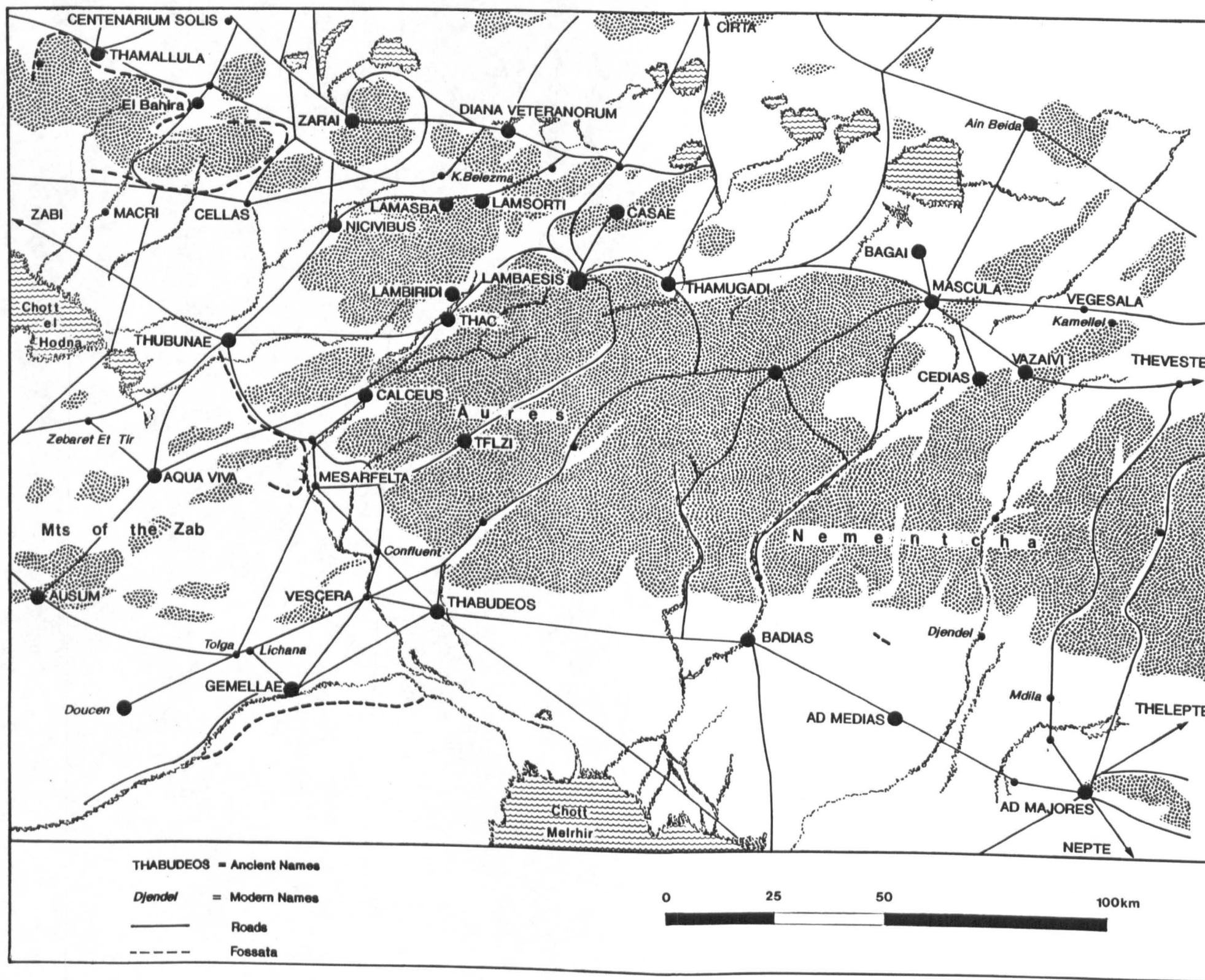
This division of Tripolitania into western and eastern halves is not simply a modern viewpoint derived from the present-day division of the area between the two states

Oaths and letters of passage: Aug. Ep. 46-47 and above section VII.1.1 & 1.5.

Stachao: AM XXVIII vi 3-4.

43. The following fortlets lie close to the *clausurae*: Ceder (Tebaga), Recheb (Demmer), Temassine (in the Bahira plain just north of the terminal of the Tebaga barrier), Chenah (east end of the Chareb chain). Hr. Kedama, Rjijila (?), Chetaoua-Tarcine-Mahalla all lie along roads and at crossroads.

44. For the Laguatan confederation see Mattingly 1983A.



Route Network in Southern Numidia
(after Janon 1977)

Tunisia and Libya, but is another consequence of the existence of the wide Jeffara plain. This expanse of steppe and shifting dune was largely devoid of permanent settlement, being left to semi-nomadic tribes who themselves may only have grazed their stock there at certain times of the year. Its broadest extent, north-south, lay roughly halfway along the east-west length of the province. The two halves of Tripolitania were in effect connected by only two chains of settlements, one in the coastal belt and the other lining the 'Limes Tripolitanus' road running along the Jebels Abiod and Nefusa.⁴⁵

VII.4 LINEAR BARRIERS AND FRONTIER CONTROL, II: NUMIDIA

VII.4.1 The Fossata: Previous Research

The most prominent feature of the Roman system of frontier in Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis is the series of three long linear barriers known as *fossata*. One 60 km stretch lies just south of *Gemellae*. Further north, a second length snakes across several chains of the Mountains of the Zab between *Mesarfelta* and *Tubunae*. The final section almost entirely envelops the Hodna Mountains in Mauretania Sitifensis.⁴⁶

One of these structures, the Segua bent el Krass, south of *Gemellae*, was recognised as being a Roman frontier work by Gsell early this century. Gsell was the first scholar to equate the 'Segua' with the *fossatum* mentioned by a law of 409 preserved in the Theodosian Code. Various lengths of the barrier enclosing the Bou Taleb range of the Hodna massif were also located, but interpreted as Roman roads or as a defensive wall built by the montagnards to keep out tribes transhumming north or southwards. In addition to Gsell's seminal article on the 'Segua' both *fossata* feature in Gsell's Atlas in one form or another. Thereafter the Krett Faraoun, as the Bou Taleb barrier was known, was the subject of two articles by Jacquot (1911 & 1915) which, along with Baradez' summary, constitute the most extensive discussion of the remains of the Hodna sector, as they survive on the ground. Guey carried out some work on the *Gemellae* sector before the Second World War, including excavation at some of the forts close to the barrier.⁴⁷

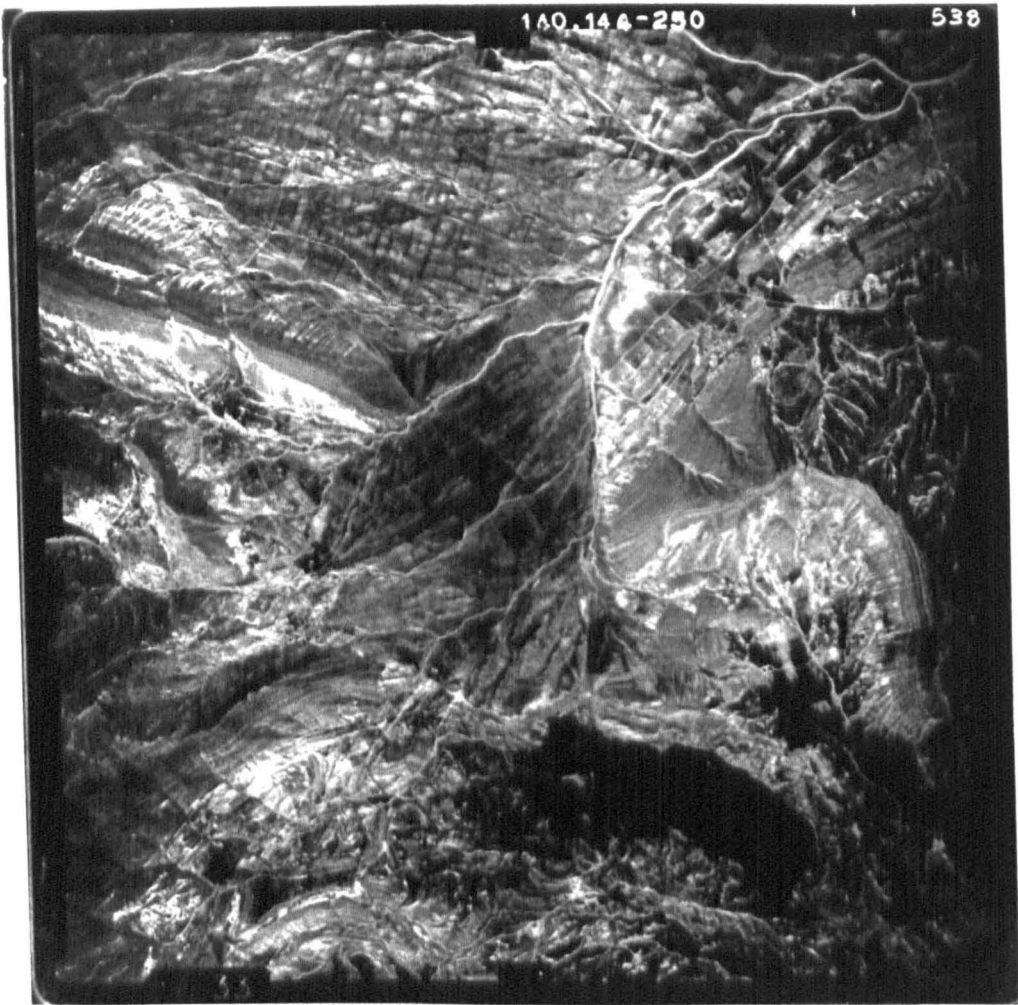
However, our understanding of the *fossata* owes most to the work of Baradez. It is as a result of his limited excavations on the *Gemellae* sector, that the barriers are generally believed to have been initiated by Hadrian. The main emphasis

45. For a map giving an overview of all known, Roman period settlement in Tripolitania see Mattingly 1984, 534 fig.7.

46. For general discussion of the *fossata* see Gsell 1903B; Guey 1939; Leschi 1942 = 1957; Baradez 1949, and 1967; Van Berchem 1952, 42-49; Luttwak 1976, 68-69 & 79-80; Pentress 1979, 98-102, 111-114 & 119-120; Jones & Mattingly 1980; Shaw 1982, 43-46; Troussset 1984B, Mattingly 1984, 190; Mattingly & Jones 1986, 87 & 94-95; Daniels 1987, 242-246.

47. The Segua bent el Krass: Gsell 1903B; AAA 48,69 & 49,18; Cagnat 1913, 598-600 and Guey 1939. The Krett Faraoun: AAA 26,33, 82 & 104, where the stretches were thought to be roads; Jacquot 1911, 273-287 & 1915, 115-120, for the theory of an enormous mountain stronghold.

HODNA FOSSATUM - Air Photo



(after Soyer 1976)

of Baradez' work was air photography. He published extensive coverage of the hitherto unknown *Mesarfelta* sector together with numerous shots of sites on the ground. His photographic treatment of the two other barriers was much sketchier. In the case of the Seguia Bent el-Krass he published air photographs relating to the rearward headquarters of *Gemellae* and the Late Roman forts right beside the barrier but little else. As for the Hodna *fossatum* Baradez published no air photographs of this sector and very few of sites on the ground, though he did add considerable lengths to the map in his 1959 article, so that it virtually encircled the Hodna Mountains. Soyer (1976, 147) has since published one air photo of a stretch of the barrier west of Salah Bey (ex Bordj el Bahira and colonial Pascal). To say this structure is little understood would be something of an understatement. It is salutary to note that the fourth stretch of barrier postulated by Baradez (1949, 109-111) - that running from *Ad Maiores* east-south-east through Chebika (*Speculum*) - has been convincingly reinterpreted by Troussel (1980) as simply a road. In this light Baradez' additions to the Hodna sector desperately need verification by fieldwork on the ground.⁴⁸

Indeed further survey work to verify the various lengths of all these barriers on the ground, to locate them precisely on a map and to plot all the associated structures, backed up by limited excavation, is manifest and increasingly urgent given the inevitable destruction wrought by time, development and population growth. In the absence of such a programme of fieldwork the observations offered here can only be tentative.

VII.4.2 Terminology and the Ancient Sources

It is worth noting that the label *fossatum* customarily applied to these structures is not securely associated with them for example by any inscriptions from the barriers. The equation is nevertheless logical since the term must refer to some sort of ditched structure. The parallel with the *Fossa Regia*, the boundary ditch defining the outer limit of the Republican province of Africa is suggestive but not conclusive. With such a straightforward connotation there is no reason why 'ditched structure' should not also embrace the shorter walls or banks which were also fronted by ditches and are now designated *clausurae* (again without direct corroboration from an ancient source).⁴⁹

48. For the attribution of a Hadrianic date to the *fossata* see Baradez 1967, 209-210. The excavations produced Hadrianic coins and pottery from the gates and towers of the 'Seguia'. There is no direct evidence for the other barriers however.

Air photo coverage of the Tobna-Mesarfelta barrier: Baradez 1949, AP and text refs. Coverage between Mesarfelta and Seba Ngata is almost complete. There are also a few views of the barrier further north where it passes through the Djebel Ouasta (1949, 75 & 79A) and in the Tobna plain (1949, 81 & 83). *Gemellae* sector: Baradez 1949, 88-89 & 93-108, and 1967, 203-210 & esp. taf.33.1-2 - photos of one of the *fossatum* gateways after excavation; and cf. Guey 1939.

The Hodna barrier: Baradez 1949, 82, 85-87 & 91-92 and 1959, pl.VI for map showing the full posited extent of the *fossatum*.

49. For the uncertainty surrounding the term *clausura* see above VII.3.1 n.30.

The term *fossatum* is found in only two ancient sources, both legal. The law of 409 is familiar to all who have studied the North African frontier. It clearly links the *fossatum* with the *limes*. Because the precise circumstances and context of the law are not recorded the *limes* might be simply refer to the frontier zone. It is perhaps more likely however that it signifies a military command or district. These came in two forms in North Africa, the overall regional or provincial commands entrusted to the *comes Africae* and the two *duces*, and the small local frontier districts in the charge of *praepositi limitum*. There is reason to believe that it was one of the latter which was concerned here, one which included a stretch of running barrier such as the *limes Tubuniensis* or the *limes Gemellensis* or perhaps one of the *Hodna limites*, the *limes Zabensis* and the *limes Thamallomensis*. This may be presumed because *fossatum* is the singular form of the noun and therefore should logically apply to only one barrier. Baradez argued that all the barriers were viewed as a single entity by the Romans and indeed were once more extensive than is apparent today. Both these theories are very doubtful. More recently one of Baradez' barriers has been eliminated, not extended as he thought possible (Trousset 1980). The fact that the Late Roman frontier in Africa was divided up into numerous local sector commands suggests that the the stretches of barrier falling within any given *limes* would likewise have been viewed as individual elements distinct from those of neighbouring commands. It, therefore, seems likely that CTh VII, xv, 1 was directly referring to only one of the linear barriers. The defence, support or maintenance (*curam munitionemque*) of that particular barrier and *limes* had apparently traditionally been entrusted to tribesmen (*gentiles*) in return for certain lands (*spatia terrarum*). Although the law was prompted by the problems which had arisen in that one area, namely the alienation to non-*gentiles* of some of the tribal land, its provisions may conceivably have had a more general applicability, as argued above in section III.1.⁵⁰

Less well known is the mention of *fossata* in the edict issued by Anastasius in 501 to regulate military affairs in Libya Pentapolis. No stretches of running barrier, not even any short *clausurae*, have been identified as yet in this region. Still more perplexingly it is not the frontier troops - here labelled *castrensi* - who were assigned the task of guarding the *fossata* but, instead, the men of the five field army regiments stationed in the province. The latter units also garrisoned the provincial cities, one *numerus* (*arithmos*) being billeted in each of the five principal cities of Pentapolis. It is difficult to see how both roles could be fulfilled simultaneously. Unless future discoveries reveal stretches of running barrier in Cyrenaica an alternative interpretation of *fossata* may have to be sought. Perhaps in

50. CTh VII, xv, 1, (409). The text is analysed above, section III.1.

See Trousset 1984B, 390-391 for an discussion of Baradez' conception of the *fossatum* and the North African frontier.

this context it denoted some other type of ditched structure such as temporary summer bases used by the field army units.⁵¹

Finally one Early Medieval source refers to a *fossatum* held by the Longobards in the Alpine valley (*clusae*) above Susa in the eighth century. The location suggests a ditched barrier wall like the *clausurae* of North Africa.⁵²

VII.4.3 The function of the Fossata

The question of what role these linear barriers played is a long running theme in North African frontier studies. Gsell (1903, 228) was dismissive of the defensive role of the barrier regarding it as useful only for keeping out smugglers and small bands of raiders. Later scholars, such as Guey and Leschi, envisaged the *fossatum* a '*limes de chameau*', a formidable barrier specifically designed to repel camel-borne Saharan nomads. These ideas were considerably elaborated by Baradez in the light of the French military doctrine of the 1930-1950's. In contrast, Van Berchem (1952, 45-46) saw the *fossatum* as simply delineating the legal boundary of the Empire, separating the barbarian desert from the Roman sown. Both interpretations have largely been supplanted by the model developed by a later generation of scholars, which relates the structures to the transhumant cycles of the North African frontier zone, a view admirably summarised by Troussset (1984B, 392-393). The many gateways Baradez identified in the barriers are a sign they were intended not to exclude the pastoralists but rather to filter and regulate them. Permission to pass through the barriers might be delayed until an optimum date to prevent competition with sedentary farmers for grazing. Their seasonal migrations might be channelled along routes which could be more easily monitored or where there would be adequate pasture. It is interesting to note that this theory does not conflict with Gsell's argument that customs control and frontier policing were the *raison d'être* of the *fossata* not defence.⁵³

Shaw (1982, 43-46) has recently dissented from the new consensus by rejecting all these explanations. His argument is worth citing in full.

51. Anastasius' regulations: SEG IX 356 & 414, viii (the *fossata*), v (the 5 regiments of *comitatenses*); cf. Olivero 1936; Maspero 1912, 20 & 91; Pringle 1981, 79-80 & 401.

Maspero regards *fossata* as synonymous with *phrouria* - fort or fortress, citing the use of the term *fossaton* to describe the fortress of Babylon in Egypt in papyri of the Arab period. Pringle (1981, 401) is more circumspect, drawing attention to the archaeological problem posed by this reference.

52. MGH(SRM) II 183; Liber Pontificalis i 450, cited by Christie 1991, 430 n.107. I am grateful to Dr Christie for bringing this reference to my attention and discussing it with me.

53. See also Troussset 1980A, 1984A, and Daniels 1987.

Guey 1939, 220-245 and Leschi 1942 = 1957, 65-74 were effectively building on the expulsion and exclusion model developed earlier by Gsell 1926, according to which, those nomadic tribes which had rejected sedentarisation were gradually pushed south and west by the advance of Roman arms, eventually being driven into the Sahara itself. Having developed the use of the camel the nomads then returned to wreak their revenge, exerting constant pressure with *razzias* in the frontier zone.

The plain fact is that there are 'gaps' sometimes of 60-70 km in width between neighbouring sections of the *fossatum*, and it is precisely through these gaps that the major routes of nomadic pastoralists to the north must have been located. This is a singularly odd way of producing strategic protection 'in-depth' for the grain producing regions to the north. That interpretation must be rejected. So too must the more subtle interpretation which attempts to take into account the fact of the 'gaps' in the system. This view holds that the walls and defences were only intended as devices 'to direct traffic', so to speak, to compel nomads to take specific routes in and out of the tell. But such compulsion was not needed in the first place. Geographical and ecological constraints overwhelmingly restricted the movements of nomads out of the Sahara to very well defined routes. There could not have been any reasonable concern on the part of the Roman authorities on this score.

Instead Shaw envisages the *fossatum* as a series of local defensive works designed to protect the bands of agricultural settlement surrounding the mountain ranges of the pre-Sahara from attack by either pastoral tribesmen, the inhabitants of the mountains or even neighbouring settlements.

There are several points of weakness in his argument. The maps prepared by scholars such as Despois, Salama, Whittaker, Fentress and Lassère to show ancient and modern transhumance flows reveal that some of these actually did have to cross the lines of one or more *fossata* whilst others were apparently unimpeded.⁵⁴ The *Gemellae fossatum* for example intersects the journey of the Arab Gheraba from Touggourt and the Oued Rhir. The position with regard to the Tobna-Mesarfelta barrier is more complex however. Some modern groups from the south, such as the Arab Gheraba and tribes originating in the Ziban, follow the valley of the Oued el Kantara parallel to but east of the *fossatum*. Others, starting from the western Ziban, skirt round the area of the *fossatum*, or only clip its northern end near Tobna, to join the tribes of the Hodna Basin funnelling into the corridors between the various mountain ranges at the north-west corner of the Basin. There, there were no barriers at all to impede their progress. Conversely some Hodna Basin tribes use the valley of the Oued Soubella, separating the Bou Taleb from the rest of the Hodna range, which for their Roman period counterparts would have meant crossing the Hodna barrier twice. Clearly therefore Shaw's statement that the pastoralist corridors lay precisely in the gaps between the barriers is only partially valid unless transhumance routes in Antiquity differed markedly from those of the Modern era, something he himself implicitly denies. Nevertheless, he is correct in noting that the existing theory is not entirely convincing since it does not explain why some groups were 'filtered' and 'regulated' by barriers and some were not.

Equally, since the barriers did not entirely surround the bands of settlement Shaw refers to it is difficult to perceive how they could have provided the agricultural communities there with protection against both the pastoralist tribesmen and the montagnards, let alone from each other. He cites the Hodna barrier, perhaps because it best fits his model, which certainly could conceivably have prevented raids emanating

54. Despois 1953, 288 (fig.30) and 1964, 222 (fig.25); Salama 1977, 592 (carte 1); Lassère 1977 (carte IV at p.352); Whittaker 1978, (map facing p.346); and Fentress 1979, 13 (map 2).

from Bou Taleb directed against *Cellas* and *Macri*, but could not simultaneously offer those settlements protection against the pastoralists in the Hodna Basin. Moreover, the Hodna barrier is a frail foundation on which to found any theory.⁵⁵ Finally, Shaw does not attempt to explain the manner in which the *fossata* may have performed this defensive function.

Nevertheless, his criticisms of both the current and earlier explanations have a certain validity. In particular it is questionable to what extent the Roman administration sought to direct, channel or otherwise regulate the movement of the semi-nomadic tribes rather than simply recognising the existing state of affairs. The example of Despois' concept that the Severan deployment in the Saharan Atlas and Mauretania Caesariensis was designed to establish a 'waiting zone' where nomads moving north from the Saharan Atlas could be held until conditions were achieved in the agricultural region may be used. The idea is highly ingenious. If the Roman authorities had had the services of such a gifted geographer they might well have devised such a scheme, but ancient geography is innocent of such concepts. It is not unlikely that the nomads themselves used the zone of the High Plateaux and Hodna Basin as a staging area delaying their progress further northward if the pasture in the Tell was heard to be slow in ripening but it may be doubted whether the army interfered with this process except on a very occasional and ad hoc basis.

It seeking to resolve these apparent contradictions it is best to review the points made when discussing *clausurae* in Tripolitania. The less elaborate form of those short barriers makes their function easier to interpret. They can readily be accommodated with what the literary and documentary sources tell us about the Roman army's involvement in frontier control. It was suggested that the *clausurae* helped to enforce imperial authority over the frontier zone and those travelling through it. They enabled military commanders to know exactly who was passing through a particular district and to obtain oaths of good conduct from chieftains, who thereby took on responsibility for the actions of their kinsmen.

As emphasised in the introductory chapter this need not imply that nomadic groups were being singled out as being especially dangerous to the frontier zone. Many recent studies have emphasised the symbiotic nature of the transhumant pastoral and sedentary agricultural economies in North Africa. The Roman army no doubt strove to impose its authority over everyone living in the frontier zone. It was simply the case that the mobility of the semi-nomadic populations, coupled with the fact that many of those tribes originated in areas outside direct Roman administration,

55. Shaw also cites *CIL VIII 2495* as evidence of the role played by the *fossatum* in local defence but this was the dedicatory inscription of a *burgus speculatorius* which lay not on the *fossatum* but 5 km behind the barrier on the road leading to El Kantara. Its purpose was specifically stated to be that of protecting travellers (*commeantii*); these 'travellers' may well have been pastoralists transiting through the area rather than farmers of the frontier zone itself.

required special measures to ensure that the authority of the emperor was recognised.

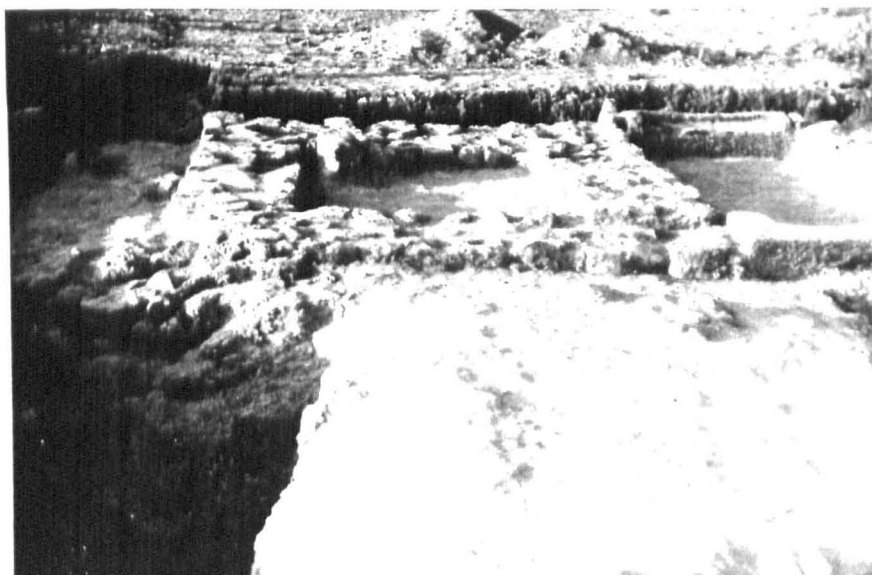
It is inherently likely that the longer barriers, just like the *clausurae*, were used for this purpose. The controversy over whether *fossata* were designed for local defence or for frontier control misses the point. It was the very kind of frontier policing outlined above which was vital in ensuring the security of life in the pre-desert and maintaining the autonomy of the sedentary agricultural communities. This could explain the implicit importance *CTh* VII, xv, 1, of 409, attaches to the support of one stretch of *fossatum*. The law stresses that the *gentiles* or their replacements should fulfil their duties of *curam et munitio* or *curam et tuitio* - whatever these precisely entailed - so that 'every part of the *fossatum* and the *limes* would be free from any hint of fear'.

There is certainly no reason to believe that the *fossata* were fighting platforms or tactically defensive barriers. Like the *clausurae* their walls were too thin or the form of their banks equally unsuitable for such a purpose. They could, however, impede a raiding party attempting to move stolen herds rapidly out of the range of Roman patrols. None of these barriers necessarily marked the theoretical limit of Roman Empire. As Isaac (1990, 396-401) has stressed, it is not certain that the Romans had a particularly clear conception of where the imperial boundaries lay. This would have been especially marked on a frontier such as the North African one, where they were not facing organised states and where much of the landscape was arid scrub pasture or bare mountains, used by semi-nomadic tribes, with only isolated belts of cultivated land. The *fossata* simply marked points where control of movement could be implemented and imperial authority enforced over those progressing deeper into the emperor's domain.

Nevertheless, the distinction between *clausurae* and *fossata* was not simply one of length. The *clausurae* are most appropriately considered as groups of structures - for example the Jebel Demmer series or the Chareb group - the length of such groups being actually equivalent to that of a stretch of *fossatum*. Thus the series of *clausurae* in the Chareb range may be viewed as a kind of long linear barrier, the escarpment conveniently performing the role of the wall or bank and ditch. Rather, it was the relationship of the two classes of structure to their geographical environment which was the crucial difference. *Clausurae* were located in areas where the prevailing orientation of relief meant that a few relatively short barriers could effectively control movement through the frontier zone, in effect making local topography work to the benefit of the Roman authorities. In contrast, the structures which have been labelled *fossata* were built precisely because the surrounding terrain facilitated infiltration by transhumant tribesmen and a consequent loss of control over movement and association.

This relationship can be demonstrated if the *fossata* are examined in turn.

GATEWAY ON THE GEMELLAE FOSSATUM



Passageway – right; Tower –centre; Ditch – left foreground.

(after Baradez 1967)



Passageway – centre background, flanked by gatetowers.

The *Gemellae* Sector

The *Gemellae* section was erected to simplify the task of monitoring groups transhuming northward from the Oued Rhir in the spring, like the Arab Gheraba of the region around Touggourt in the modern era. North of the Oued Djedi lies a zone of large oases and numerous waterpoints, known as the Ziban. The palm groves form a virtually continuous band between Mlili and Lioua. Baradez' account (1949, 90 & 93-108), together with the descriptions in the *Atlas archéologique* (sheet 48), show that agricultural development along the Djedi was still more extensive during the Roman period. Dense settlement not only lined the wadi's northern bank, from Oumach westwards through the present oases and beyond as far as Dra Rmel, but also stretched south of the Djedi, notably around *Gemellae* (El Kasbat), where a sizeable town surrounded the Hadrianic fort, and further east. It was important to vet incoming nomadic groups before they entered this region which could provide abundant cover for uncontrolled infiltration northward from one oasis to another and then via various passages through the chains of the Zab Mountains. Moreover the oasis communities might have been vulnerable to pressure to handover a share of their arborial resources.⁵⁶

To the west and east this posed no great problem. The terrain was open and flat and provided with some water sources, occasional oases and settlements, being traversed by a number of small wadis originating in the Zab Mountains or the Aurés and draining into the Oued Djedi. Consequently garrisons could be maintained at points such as Doucen, Sidi Khaled or the site near Ouled Djellal to the west, and perhaps *Thabudeos* or Bir Djefeir to the south-east. By patrolling and manning observation points troops could maintain an adequate watch over transhumance routes approaching from these directions. Immediately south of the Oued Djedi however the terrain was similarly open and flat but virtually devoid of water sources and seasonal wadis. As a result there was no suitable location for Roman outposts like Doucen. Instead, the monitoring of this quarter had to be accomplished by troops based on the edge of the Ziban itself, notably at *Gemellae*, without the depth of surveillance made possible by a screen of outpost forts. Moreover as has been suggested in the case of Hadrian's Wall (Breeze, 1985, 227) a sparsely populated zone such as this was particularly likely to become a corridor for small scale raiding parties and the like because the Roman authorities would not benefit from information provided by local inhabitants. For these reasons it would have been easier for small groups to approach the Ziban oases from the south without being detected. Construction of the *fossatum* closed this gap by enabling a relatively small number of men stationed close to the Oued

56. Examples of this sort of pressure by nomads in the Modern era are provided by Dunn 1977, 54-57 & 74-78 (the Doui Menia and Ait Atta in south-west Morocco) and Whittaker 1978, 337 (northern Tunisia), who also cites an ancient case recorded by Herodotus (IV 172-173) - the oasis dwellers of Augila forced to act as sharecroppers for the nomadic *Nasamonēs*.

A STRETCH OF THE MESARFELTA SECTOR FOSSATUM



(after Baradez 1949)

Djedi to police all traffic from the south. Frontier control could take place there, where the troops could be easily reinforced and supplied from the nearby oases, because the barrier itself compensated for the lower levels of surveillance further south. The small numbers of men stationed at any one point on the barrier could not necessarily prevent bands breaking through, but they would have stood a good chance of detecting any such crossing.⁵⁷

The *Tubunae-Mesarfelta* Barrier

The next section of running barrier presents a marked contrast to the Seguia bent el Krass. It was the problems encountered in rugged mountainous terrain, rather than flat arid expanses or dense palm groves, which evidently prompted the building of the *Tubunae-Mesarfelta* barrier.

In the light of the earlier discussion of *clausurae* this might seem paradoxical. It is clear that in Tripolitania the Roman army was able to use the terrain as an ally in imposing its authority on the frontier zone. In those cases the orientation of relief ran in directions favourable to the army's task - north-south in the Jebel Demmer and east-west in the Chareb. However, the *Mesarfelta* barrier runs south-north cutting across the east-west orientation of the Mountains of the Zab, which link the Saharan Atlas with the Aurès.

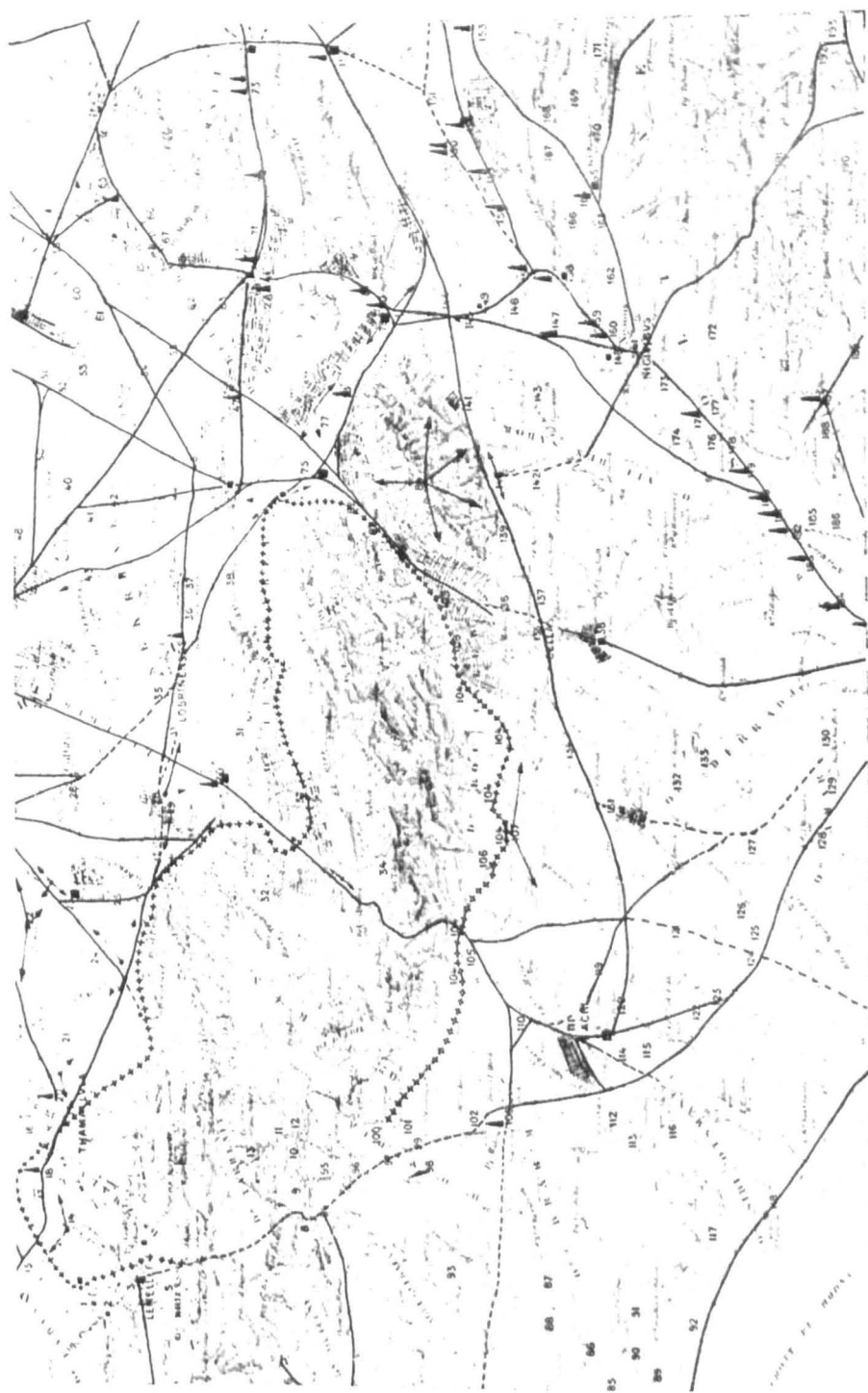
As noted above, the main seasonal transhumance pattern in the region flowed south to north or south-west to north-east and back. Ideally it would have been possible to supervise this with a few *clausurae* blocking these routes. The main corridor, the Oued el Kantara/el Hai gap was blocked in exactly this manner at *Mesarfelta* by one of the terminal branches of the *fossatum*. But it and similar barriers would have been too easily outflanked on the west by small bands which could then have used the broad west-east troughs, such as the Bled ed Daya and the Bled Sellaouine, to enter Numidia without being detected.

The *fossatum* solves this problem by not only blocking the point where the Oued el Kantara issues forth from the mountains onto the flat plain of the Bled Magraoua, but also by closing every possible pathway opening on to the corridor from the west. It runs along the slopes to the west of the corridor as far as the confluence of the Oued el Kantara with the Oued el Mellah. It then carries on north across the Bled ed Daya and through the Djebel Ahmar-Ouasta-Metlili chain, performing similar services on these east-west axes, until it apparently peters out on the flat open plain near Tobna, terrain which rendered it superfluous.⁵⁸

The Hodna *Fossatum*

57. The lack of waterpoints and seasonal courses south of the Oued Djedi is apparent as a striking blank on any map of the region not simply the Michelin 1:2,000,000 but even larger scale coverage such as the relevant sheet of the 1:200,000 series used by Gsell (AAA 48 - Biskra).

58. I owe much of my understanding of the relationship of this barrier to terrain to discussion with my supervisor, Charles Daniels, who has examined the barrier on the ground; cf. Daniels 1987, 244-246.



Taf. / Pl. VI

La même complétée par l'exploitation des photographies aériennes
(Etudes et interprétation J. Baradez)

- routes
- forts
- observatoires
- ▲ bornes milliaires
- xxxx fossatum
- ▨ travaux d'hydraulique agricole

The Hodna Fossatum after Baradez 1959

Discussion of the Hodna sector has been postponed till last because of the uncertainty surrounding that barrier. This arises not only as a result of the paucity of field research devoted to this structure, but also because its function is not immediately apparent. Simply put, why should the army have encircled the Hodna massif alone of all the mountain ranges in North Africa?

In contrast to the two above examples no single explanation for its construction can be advanced. Instead, one can do no more than pose a series of questions and suggest some alternative interpretations. Firstly, it is worth asking whether the structure even belongs to the Roman period at all. Their's was not the only state to control this area capable of organising resources on a large scale. The presence of the two other linear barriers further south perhaps tilts the balance of probability in favour of it being Roman but the questionmark over all the lengths perceived by Baradez remains formidable and as yet unanswered.

Assuming for the moment that all or most of the barrier does represent a Roman linear earthwork three possible explanations may be offered:

1. The Hodna massif was indeed encircled and isolated. It was given such anomalous treatment because of its proximity to the main south-north transhumant routes. This course was adjudged the simplest way of preventing tribesmen in the Hodna range from raiding the stock of semi-nomadic clans using the corridors, such as the Zarai gap, between the Hodna Basin and the northern plains, and thereby provoking inter-tribal warfare.
2. The structure is not strictly military at all but rather marks the boundary between, on the one hand, the vast imperial estates with their large planned towns (*castella*) on the Sétif Plains and also on the northern edge of the Hodna Basin, and on the other hand the territory of tribes or autonomous *civitates* on the slopes of the Hodna massif.⁵⁹
3. The Hodna *fossatum* was in fact two successive barriers intended to regulate south-north transhumant passage through the Hodna Mountains. The first might be Hadrianic in date and lie to the north of the range, in other words preceding full incorporation of the massif and its tribes. The second, southern, half would have been built following on full incorporation of the mountains, possibly by one of the Antonine emperors. It would thus resemble the situation in northern Britain and Upper Germany/Raetia, both regions having Hadrianic and Antonine linear frontier works.⁶⁰

Despite the justification offered for its anomalous nature, the first possibility is difficult to accept. All the

59. For estates south of the Hodna Mountains cf. CIL VIII 8777 = ILS 6888, recording the construction of Castellum Cellense in 243.

60. D.J. Wattingly in conversation with C.M. Daniels.

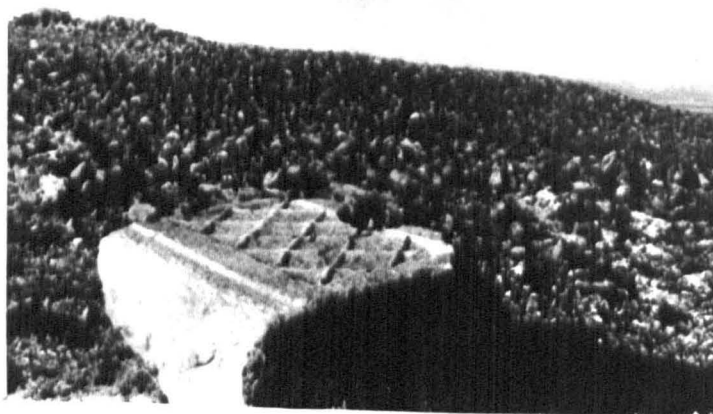
Baradez' only photo of the barrier.



Point 'where the Fossatum has been followed by a wadi course'



Fort 6 km south of Ain Azel (ex Ampere)



Fort 4 km S. of Ain Azel

available evidence suggests that the purpose of the other *fossata* and *clausurae* was to enforce Roman authority over the influx of semi-nomadic tribes originating outside the provinces, not to isolate certain internal populations. The hypothesis conflicts with the Roman army's usual treatment of mountain ranges, as will become apparent in the next section. Some mountainous areas were the theatres of serious revolts during the third-fourth centuries, such as the Grande Kabylie, but were not similarly treated. Roman policy was not to isolate mountain communities with barriers or roads but to dominate them, by punitive expeditions if necessary, reaching agreements with the chieftains of the area and if necessary protecting communications through or near the range from residual small scale banditry by such means as roadside watchtowers.

As regards the second option a boundary stone, inscribed *termines defensionis rationis privati dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Augg(ustorum)*, has indeed been found a short distance to the north of the barrier, near El Bahira on the southern edge of the Sétif Plain. However the ditch and bank seems a rather elaborate structure simply to mark a property boundary, albeit imperial property. A series of boundary stones like that mentioned above would have been so much cheaper. Moreover the widespread centuriation revealed in this area by Soyer's aerial photographic research is not confined by the 'barrier', as one might have anticipated if the latter was intended to delimit centuriated estates in the plains. The centuriation apparently straddles the *fossatum* reaching the very foot of the mountain slopes.⁶¹

The third option, too, is not without its problems. Would the functions of both the Hadrianic and Antonine phases not have been more efficiently performed by a series of *clausurae* controlling all the practicable routes through the massif? Nevertheless it remains the most promising of the three alternatives. It is noteworthy that during the Late Empire the barrier fell under the authority of two separate frontier commands, the *limes Zabensis* and the *limes Thamallulensis*, perhaps implying that by then its two halves were operated independently of one another.

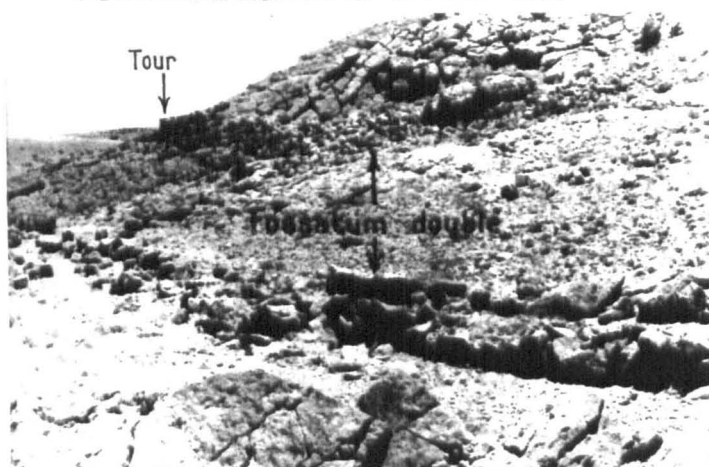
Operation of the Barriers

Most of the work of the troops stationed on the *fossata* would have been routine police work, ascertaining the identity of transhumant clans, taking oaths, issuing letters of passage, arranging escorts and collecting tolls and the like.

It is significant that the *Tubunae-Mesarfelta* barrier, like part of the Taunus barrier in Germania Superior, lies for the most part on a reverse slope, as Van Berchem (1952, 45) pointed out. The *fossatum* was not a tactically defensive barrier, it was not designed to repel an attack. The numerous

61. The boundary marker found 1 km north of El Bahira = Salah Bey (ex Pascal): AE 1908, 154 = ILS 9383. For the relationship between the Hodna *fossatum* and Algerian centuriation see Soyer 1976, esp. map facing p.180.

FOSSATUM NORTH OF MESARFELTA



(after Baradez 1949)



Close-up of the Tower in the Upper Photo

towers situated on the line were probably designed for sighting along the work in order to detect breaches in the wall or bank, whereupon the local garrison could be mobilised to hunt for the intruders. It was the observation towers clearly marked by Baradez on the surrounding heights which would have been responsible for watching the approaches to the barrier and perhaps for signalling to rearward bases.

It is possible that these systems were only fully operational for short periods of the year. Permanent manning of the whole system would have been extremely expensive of manpower and largely unnecessary. For most of the year a few watchtowers and gateways would have sufficed to control the reduced traffic. More could always have been manned if intelligence reports indicated this was necessary.

VII.4.4 The Fossata during the Later Empire

The continued use of the linear barriers during the Later Roman period is attested by a number of pieces of evidence. It is worth noting firstly that the operation of these systems for perhaps 300 years inevitably entails a host of modifications which in the absence of detailed survey and excavation can only be guessed at. Some confirmation of this is provided by examining Baradez' air photos. The impression gained is one of a very *ad hoc* system, added to over a long period, though it was probably always more irregular, ie. more responsive to the variations in terrain, than Baradez' schematic outline (for the *Gemellae* and *Mesarfelta* sectors) would acknowledge.⁶² Consequently the manner in which the barriers were used at one stage in their history might have been very different from that of a later period. For example most of the watchtowers could have been abandoned, and maintenance been restricted to the barrier itself, the gateways and a few observation posts with very good visibility - what might be termed the Hadrian's Wall (Severan phase) model.

Limes Tubuniensis

The recent discovery of a fourth century coin (353/355) in one of the gatetowers of the *Mesarfelta-Tubunae* sector *fossatum* has added further evidence that this sector was retained in use during the Later Empire. This is supported by the presence of forts along its line, the 'Castellum de la Daya', and the 'Fort Parallelogramme' at Seba Mgata, which display the characteristic features of African forts newly built in the Later Empire - projecting towers and barracks set as continuous ranges against the enceinte. Indeed, the gateway from which the Constantian coin was recovered lies

62. For example see Baradez' aerial views of the barrier between *Mesarfelta* and *Seba Mgata*: 1949, 9/12, 50, 32, 33 (partially enlargement p.225), 34, 47 (partial enlargement p.31), 48-49 (north-south in sequence). In some places the *fossatum* is formed of a wall, in others a ditch and earthen bank; some towers lie on the barrier, while others lie in front or to the rear of it; in certain places towers cluster together but elsewhere they are rather more widely and evenly spaced. In other words the *fossatum* is more comparable with the Upper German/Raetian barriers than with Hadrian's Wall.

MESARFELTA



Fossatum crosses upper half of photo (North = Right)

(after Baradez 1949)

just to the west of Fort Parallelogramme. The gateway and fort should be seen as two elements of a single integrated system, which doubtless came under the authority of the *praepositus limitis* based at *Tubunae*. Watchtowers on the heights separating the fort and the *fossatum* may have served to keep the two in touch. The location of Fort Parallelogramme itself was determined by the supporting road network. The fort lay at the junction where the road from *Tubunae* forked, one branch heading towards El Kantara, the other towards *Mesarfelta* and the south. Fourth century milestones, some as late in date as the reign of Magnus Maximus, have been found in the vicinity of Seba Mgata, indicating the continued importance the imperial authorities attached to the maintenance of communications in this area.⁶³

The northern terminal of the *fossatum* would have been surveyed by troops based at the headquarters of *Tubunae* itself. In the flat landscape to the north of Tobna any barrier was superfluous; sentinels and patrols from the base could perfectly adequately have policed the traffic converging on the various corridors which lead from the Hodna Basin to the plains of Sétif and Constantine.

At the southern end of the *fossatum* lies the important site of *Mesarfelta*. Various possible military structures can be identified here. Two are labelled on Baradez' air photo (1949, 48), the larger as a 'castrum' and the smaller as a 'fortin'. In addition, he marks a roughly playing card shaped tell in the valley. As Daniels (1982, 120) argues, this is quite probably the second century fort whose garrison the *cohors VI Commagenorum* are recorded building an amphitheatre here between 177-180. Close scrutiny of the photograph tentatively suggests that the northern half of the playing card site was overlain on a slightly different alignment by a smaller square fortification possibly equipped with angle towers. Either the 'castrum', the 'fortin' (perhaps a small *quadriburgium*) or the putative second phase site on the tell might represent a Late Roman military installation at *Mesarfelta*, housing troops monitoring the southern end of the *fossatum*. At the very least it seems unlikely that such a complex site could be entirely devoid of Late Roman military occupation.⁶⁴

63. Jones & Mattingly 1980 for the coin in a *Mesarfelta* sector gateway.

Castellum de la Daya: Baradez 1949, 71, 74 (photos A-C) & 295-296; Fentress 1979, 92.

Seba Mgata (Fort Parallelogramme): AAA 37,57; Baradez 1949, 9-10 & 12 (air photographs), 68 B & 204 C (surface views) and 11, 243-244 & 247-248 (text); Fentress 1979, 90.

Another possible site of this type is the 'Castellum du Bled Tin', between the Daya fort and Seba Mgata: Baradez 1949, 60 & 295, with plates pp.61 A & B, 68 A and 69 B. Baradez includes so little information about this site that it cannot be assigned to any period. The fort was square (no dimensions given) with a single gateway. Some traces of internal buildings may be visible in the interior. It lay beside the *fossatum* and was overlooked by a watchtower on a nearby spur. No air photo was published nor any indication given as to whether it had projecting towers or barracks set against the enceinte. For the Late Imperial milestones on the *Lambaesis-El Kantara-Tubunae* routes see Leschi 1946-1949 = 1957, 58-63, Albertini 1931, Gsell 1901C, 449.

64. For *Mesarfelta*, 2 km north of El Outaya, Baradez' discussion (1949, 257-263) is fundamental; cf. also AAA 37,64-70.

FORTS OF THE LIMES TUBUNIENSIS

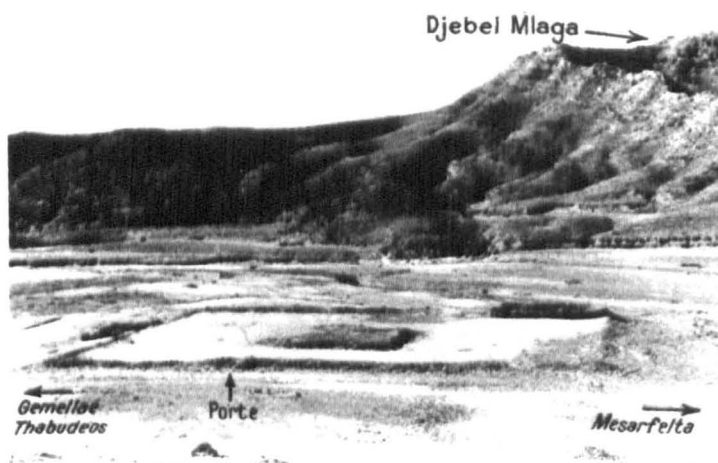


'Castellum of the Bled Tin'



(after
Baradez 1949)

'Castellum of the Daya'



'Castrum of the Confluent'

A second structure in the area for which a Late Roman military role has been suggested is the fort below the Djebel Mellah (Baradez' 'Castrum du Montagne du Sel'). The Late Roman refurbishment is implied by Fentress (1979, 90 & 121, map 9) whilst a late third century date has been suggested by Le Bohec (1989A, 428). Secondary modifications are certainly apparent in this fort, including a rebuilt enceinte reducing its size and the addition of a basilica to the *principia*, which might imply a third century date, as Le Bohec argues. However no projecting towers were added to the circuit. In the absence of any other evidence this may be accepted as ruling out a fourth century military phase. It is possible that this work is not even military at all. An abandoned second century fort may have been reoccupied at a much later date by the local civilian population as a suitably protected site for their most important communal building, the church. A new, much thinner, wall was perhaps built on the remains of the old, leaving out the northern third of the fort because a wadi had already eroded its north-east corner. Baradez actually suggested the basilica might be Christian but without excavation or diagnostic inscriptions this can neither be confirmed nor refuted.⁶⁵

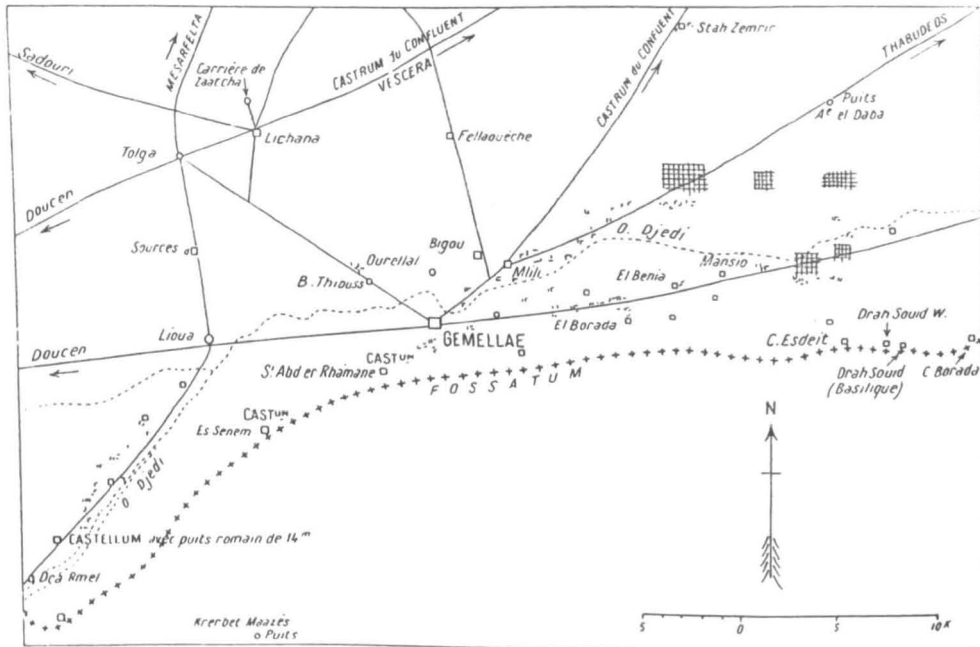
From *Mesarfelta* the major north-south highway of the frontier zone followed the Oued el Kantara (renamed the Oued Biskra) south-eastward across an area of open plain, heading towards the Ziban and ultimately *Gemellae*. When it reached the southernmost chain of the Mountains of the Zab - the Djebel bou Rhezal, Djebel Mlaga and Sra mta Chicha - the road used the passage forced by the confluence of Oued Biskra with several other wadis. Esconced on the north side of this vital choke point was a rectangular fort, Baradez' 'Castrum du Confluent'. It covered 0.78 hectares and with features such as rounded corners, was clearly built during the Principate. In contrast to Djebel Mellah there is solid evidence, architectural as well as stratigraphic, that this fort had been refurbished by the military during the Late Empire. Most notably, projecting angle and interval towers were added to the enceinte.⁶⁶

The rationale behind the location of this fort is obvious. As Baradez' map well illustrates, it was a key position in the road network of the frontier zone. Southwards, routes diverged, on the one hand, to *Vescera* and *Gemellae*, and on the other towards *Thabudeos*, *Badias* and ultimately Tripolitania. North from the Confluent fort, ran the great frontier highway leading to El Kantara, *Lambaesis*, *Tubunae* and Mauretania, whilst a second route took a more direct path to *Lambaesis*, following the Oued el Abdi north-east through Menaa. Consequently, much of the region's traffic would funnel through this gap, making it not only an ideal point to check

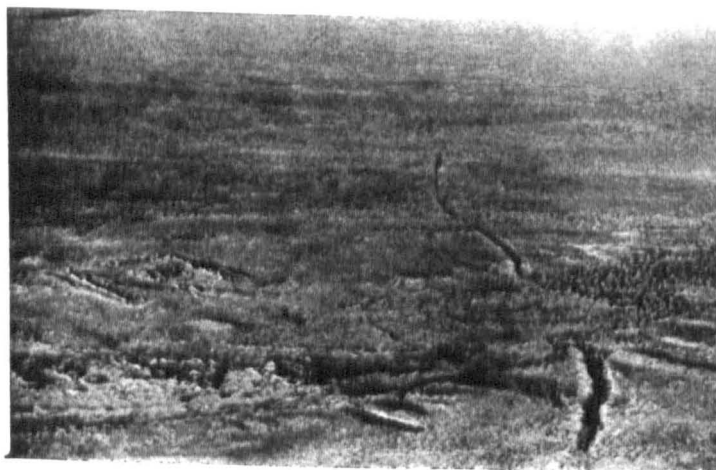
65. AAA 37,63; Baradez 1949, 264-267.

66. Baradez 1949, 268 & 271-276 and cf. Van Berchem 1952, 47 for details of Baradez' 'sondages' in the fort, which revealed the addition of projecting towers. See also Fentress 1979, 89.

LIMES GEMELLENSIS



(after Baradez 1949)



Bourada and the fossatum

the permits of pastoralist tribesmen moving north, but also vital for the protection of the army's own communications.⁶⁷

To the west of the *fossatum* a screen of new outpost forts was established in the Mountains of the Zab. In the north, 35 km south-west of *Tubunae*, lay the large fort of Zebaret et Tir. Twenty kilometres south-east, the *Centenarium Aqua Viva* was built at the springs of Ain Namia, in 303. Finally, the fort at Bir Lefta, summarily described by Baradez (1949, 330), straddled one of the routes leading out of the Ziban and into the mountains.⁶⁸

Zebaret and *Aqua Viva* both lie 30-40 km west of the *fossatum* and sit astride north-south or east-west routes. Their garrisons could mount patrols throughout the Mountains of the Zab, collecting intelligence and scrutinising tribal movements for the benefit of the garrisons on the *fossatum*. Rebuffat (1982, 485-488, esp. fig.9) has calculated the radius any mounted patrol could operate, riding out and returning in the same day, as being 25 km. Thus it is obvious the garrisons of these forts could cover the entire area separating them from each other and from the *fossatum* by means of such daily patrols. The anomalous size of the fort at Zebaret might imply that it also performed other roles, perhaps the staging of much longer range patrols into the Saharan Atlas, where the strong military presence established under Severus had gradually been scaled down in the mid-late third century.⁶⁹

Limes Gemellensis

Continued use of the *Gemellae* barrier may also be presumed on the basis of the construction of a series of small forts along its length. Although the entire length of the barrier with all its attendant structures has never been described in detail, let alone planned or covered by comprehensive published air photography, some comments regarding the Late Roman phases can be made as a result of the work of Guey and Baradez. The former identified four mud-brick forts towards the western end of the barrier, publishing air photographs of three and excavating two of them. The easternmost site, Bourada, is the best known of the three. Extensive trenching by Guey recovered a virtually complete plan. In the centre of the group, at Drah Souid, two forts lie less than a kilometre apart. Guey and Baradez published air photographs of the pair and Guey excavated a basilica in the eastern fort. Esdeit, the most westerly member, is covered only by Guey's summary description (1939, 191).

At 0.68 hectares (dimensions 77 x 88 m) Bourada is the largest of the four forts. It is equipped with the familiar components of rectangular projecting towers, a single gateway

67. It probably marked the dividing line between the *Gemellae* and *Tubunae* commands, but there is no indication of which it was subordinate to.

68. Zebaret et Tir: Baradez 1949, 125, 298-299; Fentress 1979, 86; Daniels 1987, 260 & 263. *Centenarium Aqua Viva*: AAA 37,37; Leschi 1941A and 1943 = 1957, 47-57; Baradez 1949, 297-299; Fentress 1979, 86; Daniels 1987, 260 & 263. Bir Lefta: AAA 48,2; Baradez 1949, 121 & 330.

69. See below VII.6.1.

and barracks or stabling built against the enceinte. In the centre of the enclosure stands a courtyard building, complete with a bath suite. The building presumably housed the officer in charge and served various administrative functions. Drah Souid East was less fully investigated by Guey. In the interior of the fort he excavated, and published a plan of, a basilical structure which he considered to have been a church. He also put a few trenches across the ditches and enceinte. Guey does not record the dimensions of the fort but Rebuffat has calculated them to be approximately 80 x 60 m, on the basis of comparing Guey's plan of the basilica and Baradez' air photograph of the fort complete with Guey's trenches. This would imply an area of 0.48 hectares.

The little that is known of both Drah Souid West and Esdeit suggests they fall into the same group as the two forts above. Projecting towers have been recognised on Guey's air photograph of Drah Souid West, whilst Esdeit has a raised 'eminence' in the centre which probably represents a central courtyard building or basilica as at Bourada and Drah Souid East respectively. Both forts were built of mud brick. Drah Souid is the smallest of the four, its dimensions being recorded as 65 x 55 m (0.36 hectares). Esdeit is rectangular like all the others but only the length of its long axis has been recorded, at 80 m. It may be similar in size to Drah Souid East.⁷⁰

Baradez and the Atlas list another five posts further west along the line but so very sketchily that little can be said. For example no adequate account exists of the site near the western terminal of the Seguia.⁷¹ However, Es Senem, the next site 15 km to the north-east, seems to share many of the characteristics of the Bourada/Drah Souid group and may be tentatively assigned to the Late Empire, despite the absence of any published plan or air photo.⁷²

Even if all the sites identified by Baradez and others along the barrier were Late Roman in date and military in purpose, there appears to be nothing in the western and central parts of the *fossatum* to compare in density with the Bourada/Drah Souid group, towards its eastern end. The reason for this cluster of four forts is demonstrated by the modern railway and road from Touggourt, which cross the 'Seguia' close to

70. The projecting towers at Drah Souid West: Fentress 1979, 85; Guey's air photo (the only published example for the fort) is 1939, pl.I, lower, facing p.183. Esdeit: Guey 1939, 191.

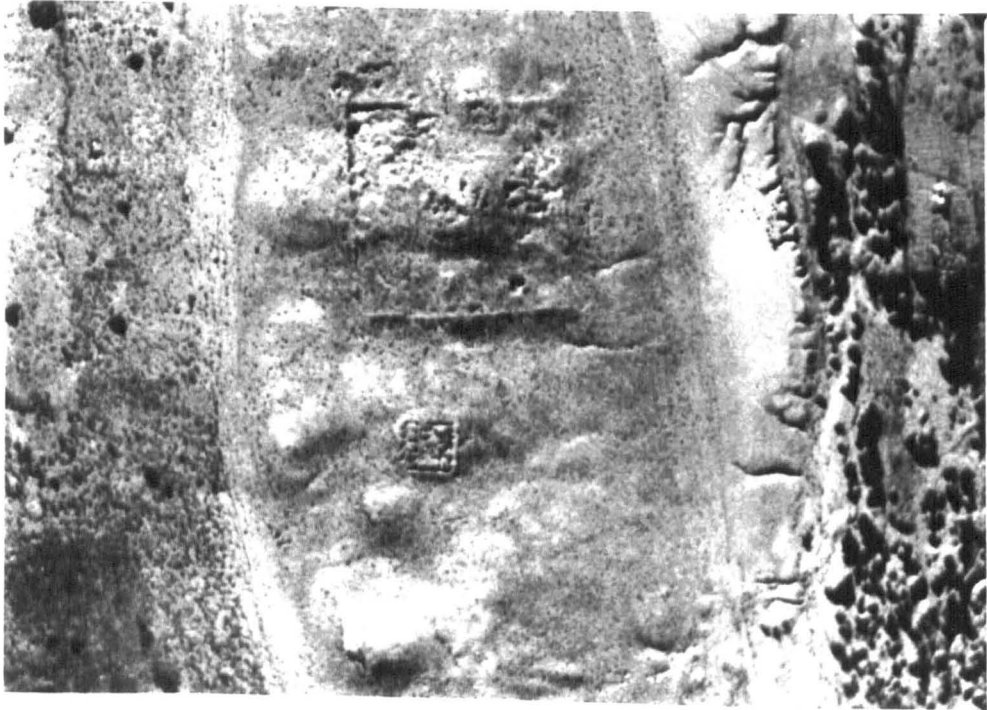
71. Baradez is the main source for all but one of these sites - 1949, 94 & 99. The only published photo is the group 'snap' taken at the marabout of Si Abderrahmane (p.98 C).

For the anonymous site near the western terminal see AAA 48,70, 'Roman ruins'. Both Baradez and Guey omit any mention of this site though Baradez does mark it on his maps. It must have lain only a short distance off the Armée de l'Air photo of the western terminal, published by both Guey (1939, pl.III facing p.226) and Baradez (1949, 89 A).

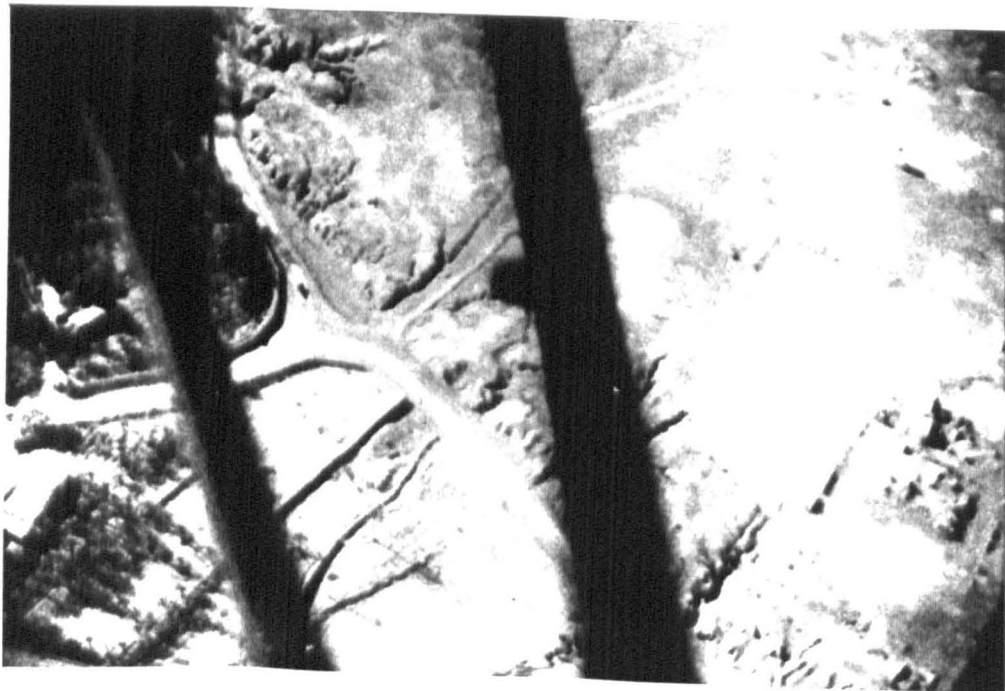
72. Es Senem: AAA 48,71; Baradez 1949, 99, 106 & 121. Fentress 1979, 85, confuses this site with one photographed by Baradez east of Gemellae in the band of 'mansiones' and 'fortins' - farms and gsur? - between the Oued Djedi and the Seguia, 1949, 95 (pl.A-C) & 99. As for Es Senem itself, the fort is 80 m square, built of mud brick like the Bourada group and featured 4 angle towers. The fact that the latter were visible at all beneath the mud brick collapse, even from the air, suggests that they were projecting towers, though Baradez does not directly say so.

THE ZIBAN

'Castellum Schneider', Doucen



(after Baradez 1949)



Biskra – the 'Turkish Fort'

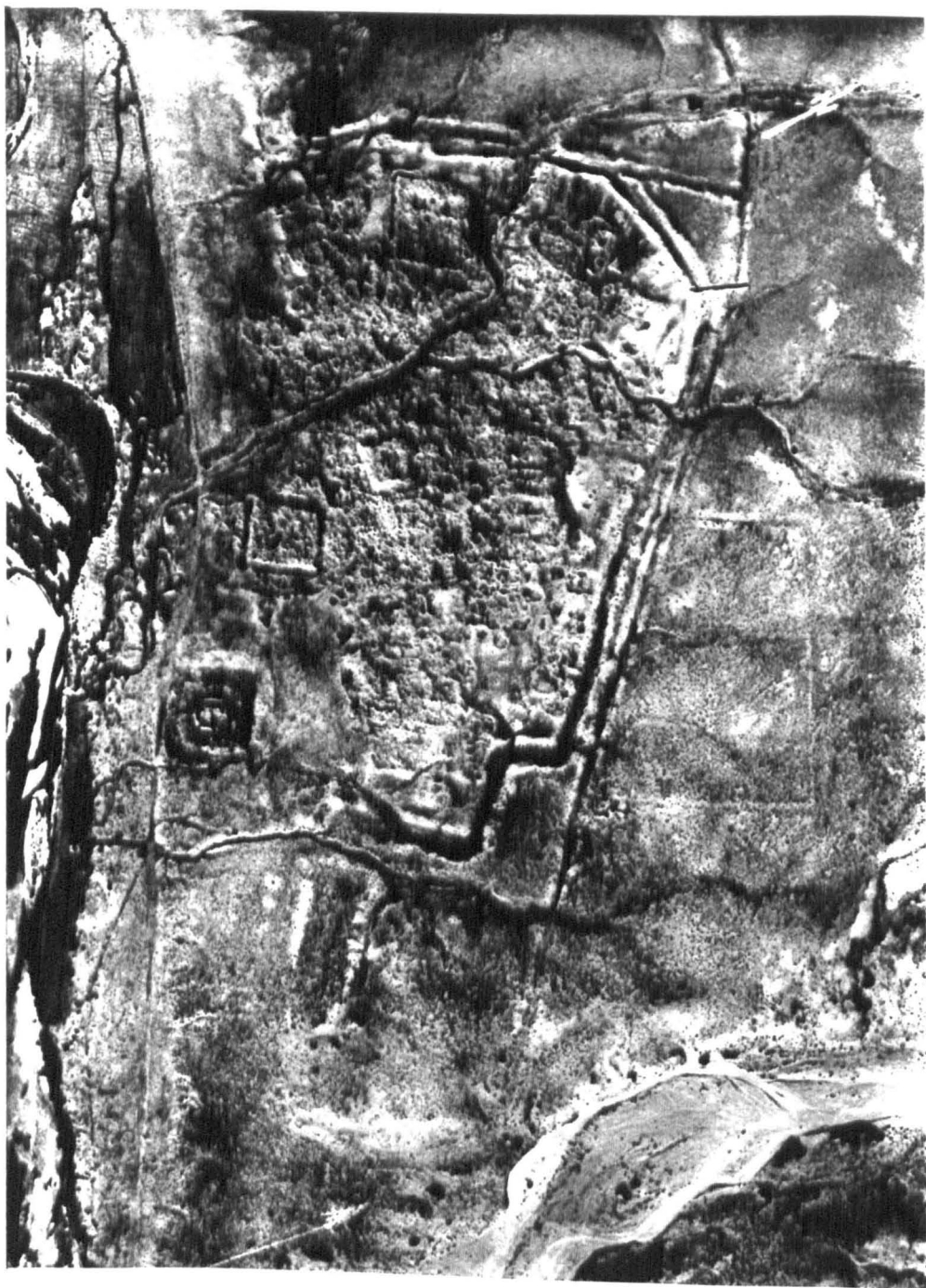
Drah Souid West. In Antiquity the transhumance corridor leading to the Ziban and the Tell from the great Saharan oases, such as Touggourt, Ouargla and the Souf, probably followed much the same general course as these present-day communications arteries. It represents the best route for the movement of large numbers of people and livestock in this part of the desert. The route would have run northward from Touggourt, through the string of oases known as the Oued Rhir, at the north end of which the trail merged with that from the Souf, then on via the waterpoints at Chegga and Bir Djefeir, where the route veered round to a north-westerly direction. This would have taken the ancient pastoralists through the *fossatum* in the region of Drah Souid, like the modern arteries, reaching the Oued Djedi just south of the Oumach. There the itinerary could fork, one course heading northward to Biskra, 'Castrum du Confluent' and the *Mesarfelta*-El Kantara corridor, the other westward to the larger centres of the Ziban.⁷³

The identification of Drah Souid as the major crossing point on the *fossatum* for nomadic groups accords well with the theory outlined in Appendix M, that the basilica within the eastern fort was designed to provide a fitting setting for oath swearing, which was such an important part of frontier policing and diplomacy. There, nomadic chieftains could formally display their own and their followers' willingness to keep the peace whilst in imperial territory. In turn this might also explain the close proximity of the forts at Drah Souid. Ordinarily it would be unlikely that two such sites only 900 m apart would be occupied at the same time. Although the possibility that the barely known western fort belongs to a different period cannot be excluded, it is also conceivable that the existence of two forts represents some sort of role segregation. Responsibility for patrol and surveillance was perhaps assigned to the garrison of the western fort whilst the eastern fort was given over to the ceremonial and ritualistic aspects of frontier control.

Garrisons were stationed in several forts 15-35 km west of the main belt of the Ziban oases. The best known of these forts is the 'Castellum Schneider' on the Koudiat el-Djarouf at Doucen. Baradez' air photograph shows it to have been a typical Late Roman fort, similar in size and form to Bourada and *Aqua Viva*. It presumably replaced the Gordianic fort of 242, which may have lain on the site of the French bordj as Carcopino and Gsell believed. Two other forts or fortlets are recorded in the vicinity. These may represent Hadrianic, Antonine or Severan posts, or perhaps a late fourth century replacement for the Castellum Schneider itself. In the absence of more detailed fieldwork there is no way of discriminating.⁷⁴

73. The distances between the Bourada-Esdeit forts according to Guey (1939, 191) are, from east-west: 3.5 km, 900 m, 2.2 km. Moreover, there is only 5.5 km between Bourada and the eastern terminal of the *fossatum* at Bordj Saada. In contrast the sites Baradez lists (1949, 99) are 7 or 8 km apart, whilst the interval between Es Senem and AAA 48,70 is roughly 15 km.

74. AAA 48,73; Carcopino 1925, 31-33; Baradez 1949, 116 & 123; Daniels 1982, 120 and 1987, 260 & 263 fig.10.19 G, correcting Fentress 1979, 85 & 106, who assigns the Castellum Schneider to the reign of



Site 6 km E. of Ouled Djellal

(after Baradez 1949)

Doucen did not stand alone. To the south, an important and extremely complex settlement lies 6 km east of Ouled Djellal on the Oued Djedi. Several possible *quadriburgi* can be tentatively identified amongst the ruins and as at *Mesarfelta* it is difficult to believe such complexity does not include at least one Late Roman military post.⁷⁵ To the north, a fort has been recorded at Bir Lefta, at the foot of the Mountains of the Zab. Little is known of this site apart from Baradez' terse description, noting that it had four angle towers and a single east-facing gateway. Baradez does not state whether the corner towers projected, but the fact that the 'castellum' had only one gateway and that its corner towers were quite obvious suggests it was a small late fortlet of the common *quadriburgium* type, rather than a military site of the Principate. This post would have been within reach of patrols from forts to the west of the *Tubunae-Mesarfelta fossatum*, like *Aqua Viva*. There is no evidence however to suggest that the fort of *Ausum* (Sadouri), 25 km further west, was retained in use. It has the projecting gatetowers typical of third century forts but no projecting interval or angle towers. As we have seen these were present on the *Castrum du Confluent*.⁷⁶

In the flat terrain west of the Ziban, patrols from these forts could police movement through the region effectively without the aid of barriers. The small oases of this area were sufficient to support the additional requirement for drinking water represented by the garrisons but were too widely scattered to mask the progress of bands of semi-nomads.

Finally, there are a number of fortifications actually situated in the Ziban oases themselves, such as Lichana, Sidi Fellaouche, Bigou, the 'Turkish fort' at Biskra, and perhaps most notable of all, Tolga. The controversy over the date of these sites, whether they belong to the Byzantine or the Roman periods, is discussed in Appendix A.3.1 and there is little that can be usefully added here. They fall into the pattern of sites such as 'Castrum du Confluent' which straddle nodal points in the internal communications network, equally appropriate for both Late Roman and Byzantine sites. Tolga, for example, lies in one of the larger oases north-west of *Gemellae*, an important crossroads where a major north-south route through the western Ziban is intersected by an east-west route.⁷⁷

The establishment of new forts south of *Gemellae* indicates that the barrier was still regarded as being of considerable

Gordian (followed by Euzennat 1989, 273-274). See below Appendix E.3.2 for discussion of 'Fentress' and Euzennat's attribution of a Gordianic date to the Castellum Schneider.

75. Baradez 1949, 119 & 124 (air photo); Daniels 1982, 120.

76. Bir Lefta: AAA 48,2; Baradez 1949, 121 & 330.

Ausum: AAA 48,1; Baradez 1949, 119 & 125 pl.A (air photo); Fentress 1979, 85-86; Daniels 1987, 247 fig.10.11 (the only reliable plan) & 256. The latest direct evidence of occupation is the inscription of 247 (CIL VIII 8780 = 18016).

77. Tolga: AAA 48,27; Blanchet 1898A, 331-332; Gsell 1901A II, 370 n.2; Baradez 1949, 121; Pringle 1981, 139 & 429; Troussset 1985, 373 & 376, Salama 1991, 95.

Refs for other sites see Appendix A.3.1 n.8.

importance. The movement of troops up onto the line of the *fossatum* must represent a major redeployment of the local garrison, perhaps following on from the reorganisation of the military command structure in Numidia with the institution of the *praepositi limitum*. The new forts may have been inspired by a desire for tighter control on the line of the barrier itself, but to what extent this in turn reflects greater pressure from the desert is arguable. It is difficult to believe that the structure could ever have been adapted for use as a tactically defensive barrier - Guey's '*limes de chameau*' - to prevent *razzias* by nomadic tribes. The arguments cited above (section VII.4.3) are still valid, for no major change in the form of the *fossatum* can be detected during the period and as it stands it appears unsuitable as a fighting platform.

VII.5 POLICING MOUNTAIN RANGES: MAURETANIA

The Later Roman army's response to a different set of problems, those associated with the policing of mountain ranges, is revealed by its activity in Mauretania Caesariensis. This focus on internal mountainous regions was underlined when the Mauretanian *limites* listed in the *Notitia* were analysed (above section VI.1.2). A number of those commands were centred in or on the edge of formidable massifs. The same might apply to some of the other four, unknown *limites* in the province.

Some clue as to the precise role of the Mauretanian *limites* can be gained by examining what is known of their infrastructure. This is not an easy task. The structures associated with such commands are often difficult to identify archaeologically because of the predisposition of nineteenth century surveyors to identify every substantial ruin as a '*poste militaire*'. However, epigraphic discoveries help to fill the gap.

VII.5.1 Auzia

The crucial strategic importance of the site *Auzia* (Sour el Ghozlane, ex Aumale) has been underlined by Lassère (1981, 317):

The town stands on a dissected plateau, bounded by two wadis, but equally confined between two mountainous chains of the Titteri: *Auzia* is surrounded by passes and commands, towards the south, one of the routes which leads to the high plains between the Sersou and the Hodna. Now it so happens that the one of the wadis which flows near to the town, the O. Lekhal, is a tributary of the the Oued Sahel, called further downstream and as far as the sea the O. Soumam. That is to say that *Auzia* lies on one of the rare natural routes which leads from the sea to the steppe.

Auzia was a major crossroads, with routes heading off in as many as seven directions, some being of major importance. Salama (1977, 582 & 593 *carte 3*) has argued that this crucial strategic position was one of the earliest points occupied by the Romans in the interior of eastern Caesariensis. It was sufficiently important to retain a garrison throughout the

Roman period. It was the base of the *cohors I Aelia Singularium* from the early/mid second century onwards. In the third century, when the surrounding area was the scene of considerable unrest, the cohort was joined by a *vexillatio equitum Maurorum*. The local hero, Gargilius Martialis, was commander of this combined force, *in territorio Auziensi praetendentium*, during the 250's, when he tracked down the rebel chieftain Faraxen. The road leading westward from Auzia, through very rough, hilly terrain, towards *Rapidum*, had already been protected by a series of watchtowers during the second century. There is no specific evidence that these towers were still in use in the Late Empire, but the existence of a military command in this area may imply that this was indeed the case. Following the 'restoration of peace' by Aurelius Litua in 290 the immediate rebuilding at Auzia of a bridge, which had been 'destroyed by the savagery of war', attests the importance of communications in this region. Further north, near Ain Bessem, a large fort surveyed the great plain of Aribis, and may have commanded a route through it. Salama (1951, map) marks that site as a crossroads.⁷⁸

VII.5.2 Limes Bidensis

Further north, *Bida* formed the headquarters of a command covering the Grande Kabylie. In all probability *Bida* was the site of a first-second century fort, like *Auzia*, since it forms the major settlement in the interior of the Grande Kabylie, but it is less easy to postulate unbroken evolution from an earlier base than was the case with *Auzia*. There may well have been a gap in military occupation, perhaps after the Severan advance to *nova praetentura*, or conceivably from an even earlier date. As yet, however, very little is known regarding the subjugation of this particular region of *Caesariensis*, during the Principate. The formation of the *limes Bidensis* probably did not occur until the aftermath of the campaigns against the *Quinquegentanei* in the 250's or those waged during the reign of Diocletian, first by the governor, Aurelius Litua, and then by the Augustus, Maximian. *Bida* itself may have been a *municipium*, if the itineraries are to be trusted, but the survival of tribal institutions was particularly marked in the surrounding districts. It is possible that considerable reliance was placed on the support

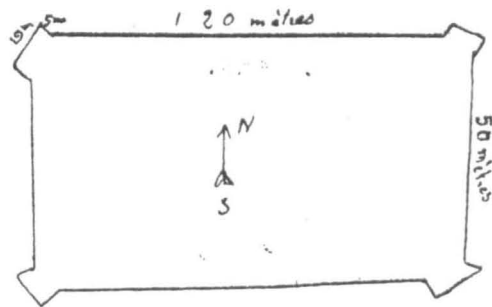
78. For the site and remains of Auzia see AAA 14,105. Salama 1951 marks seven roads departing from the town.

For *cohors I Aelia Singularium* at Auzia see Benseddik 1982, 63-64 & 233-234. Gargilius Martialis: CIL VIII 9047 = ILS 2767. Cf. also CIL VIII 9045 = ILS 2766, and Pavis d'Escurac Doisy 1966 = AE 1966, 597, for other indications of third century military activity at Auzia. By 301 a local *praepositus limitis* was installed in the area, cf. CIL VIII 9025. (The emperor Commodus) *securitati provincialium suorum consulens turres novas instituit et veteres refecit oper(a) militum [s]uorum*: CIL VIII 20816 = ILS 396 = (?) AE 1902, 220, cf. AAA 14,99, Robert 1901, 1327-138 and Laporte 1989, 155 & 220-221.

The *pontem belli saevitia destructum*: CIL VIII 9041 = ILS 627.

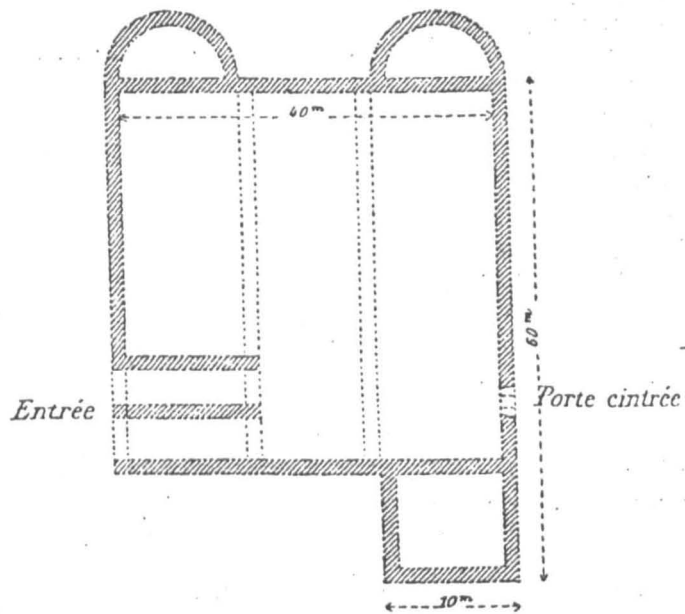
The fort 2 km NW of Ain Bessem: AAA 14,28, and see above VI.3.1 n.34 for full references.

GRANDE KABYLIE



Bordj Menail

(after Vire 1898)



Ksar Kebouche

(after Mercier 1886)

of tribal levies and chieftains to back up a force of regular troops.⁷⁹

The Road Network

The few sites in this area which can be assigned an official military role were, without exception, located beside the major communication routes, in particular the east-west road north of the Djurdjura range. Although no milestones have yet been discovered along its length this route was clearly of great importance, being recorded in the itineraries. It directly linked the Mitidja plain, *Icosium* and the provincial capital *Caesarea* with *Tubusuctu*, *Saldae* and all the ports further east. In effect it formed part of North African coastal highway, an inland cut-off providing a shorter alternative to the course (via *Rusazu*, *Iomnium* and *Rusuccuru*) along the coastal bulge of the Grande Kabylie. Furthermore, it represented one of the most direct routes between *Caesarea* and *Sitifis*.

Bida itself was situated on this road. So in all probability was the *centenarium* built by a former tribal prefect, Masaisilen, and commemorated by the inscription found at Ourthi n'Taroummant, near Tala Amara, midway between *Bida* and modern Tizi Ouzou. A number of supposedly military fortifications are recorded in the western Grande Kabylie, along the possible lines of the road, by Gsell, in the *Atlas archéologique*, and by his main sources for this area, Vigneral (1868) and Viré (1898). It is likely that most of these sites represent towns, villages or estate centres girded with circuit walls, but they include a possible Late Roman fort near Bordj Menaiel. The published plan (Viré 1898, 42) is extremely sketchy but depicts a rectangular site with a projecting tower at each angle. However, it must be admitted that other interpretations of this site such as a fortified villa are equally feasible. More definite ground is reached at Souma, a turreted rectangular building near Thenia, c. 15 km west of Bordj Menaiel. It overlooked the Kabylie highway as the road emerged from the eastern mouth of the pass of the Beni Aicha, the only easy passage from the Mitidja to the Isser valley. The dedicatory inscription above the gateway, if correctly interpreted, indicates it was part of the domain of the fourth century tribal magnate Nubel. Though clearly a defensible estate centre rather than a fort, the close association between the imperial administration and Nubel gives Souma a semi-official status which makes its position especially noteworthy. Another probable estate centre, indicated by the ruins of a settlement complete with a massive Late Antique mausoleum, lies a few kilometres to the north-east at Takitount near Blad Guitoun.⁸⁰

79. *Bida municipium*: *Itin. Ant.* 39.4; *Tab. Peut. Seg II.3* (as *Syda municipium*); cf. AAA 6,104; Martin 1969, esp. 4-7; and Gasco 1982B, 253-254. For tribal society in the Grande Kabylie see IV.2.1, VIII.3.3 and below.

80. *Centenarium* of Masaisilen: AAA 6,97-99 and see below VIII.2.4 and Appendix K.1.

Bordj Menaiel: AAA 5,69; Viré 1898, 41-42. The recorded dimensions of 120 x 50 m, if accurate, might favour the villa alternative for the proportions seem abnormal for a fort.

To the east of *Bida* two sites along the road have frequently been assigned a military role, Ksar Chebel and Ksar Kebouche. How much reliance can be placed on these interpretations is questionable. On the basis of Mercier's plan (1886, 471), Ksar Kebouche in particular is an unconvincing fort. The layout would seem to be more appropriate to a farm or villa site, being reminiscent of those revealed by Leveau's work in the hinterland of *Caesarea*. If an official role is to be attributed to the site, it might be preferable to envisage its use as a road station of greater or lesser importance (*mansio* or *mutatio*). However, the discovery of a dedication at Ksar Chebel involving imperial officials and perhaps a tribal chieftain may imply some sort of military presence at that site earlier in the Roman period.⁸¹

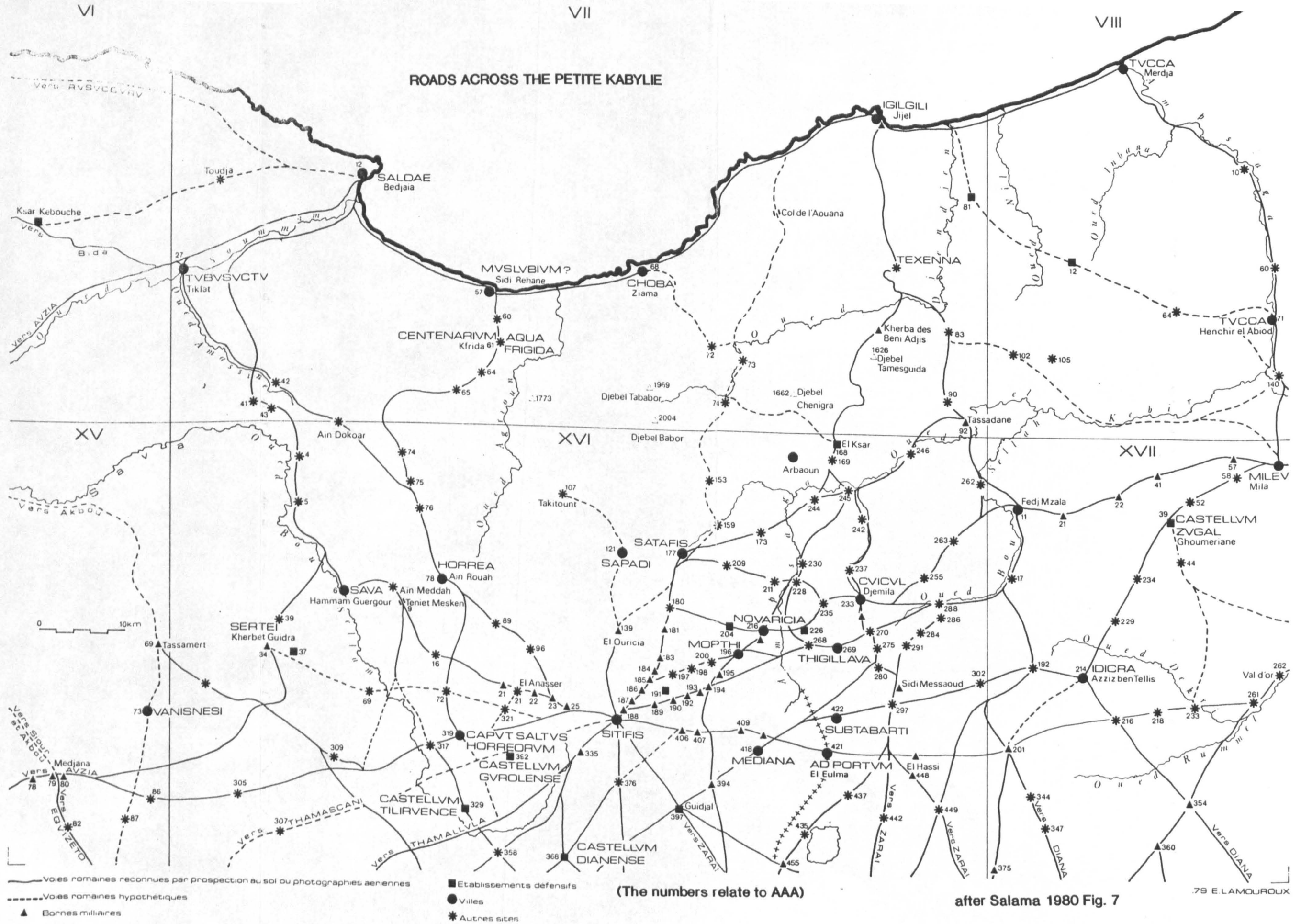
The policing of communication routes in the Grande Kabylie was not a phenomenon peculiar to the Late Empire. A circular watchtower has been identified at Daouark, on the lesser peak of the Djebel Tamgout d'Azazga. It surveyed the road which headed due southward linking the coastal *colonia* of *Rusazu* (Azeffoun) with the east-west route through the Kabylie. The surviving dedicatory inscription is of Severan date (AD 201), but this only marks the restoration of the watchtower by the *Rusazitani* on the instructions of the governor Aelius Peregrinus, not its initial construction. It is unlikely that the *turris* stood alone in the Kabylie; it was probably one of a whole series built throughout the province, and restored from time to time, as implied by a Commodan inscription from Ain Témouchent (*Albulae*) - *burgis novis provincia munita, miliaria conlapsa vetustate restituit*. The role of towers as an integral part of Roman road organisation could scarcely be more clearly expressed. It is unclear whether the watchtower at Daouark, and its presumed counterparts, were manned by regular troops or a corveed civic militia. Nevertheless, coupled with the presence of a centurion at Ksar Chebel, it demonstrates that roads in the region were monitored over a long period prior to the formal establishment of the *limes Bidensis*.⁸²

Souma in the Beni Aischa pass: AAA 5,48; Gsell 1903A, 28-30; *CIL* VIII 9011 and see below VIII.2.1-3. Takitount, near Blad Guitoun: AAA 5,54; Vigneral 1868, 99-101; for the mausoleum see Gsell 1898, 481-499 and 1901A, II, 412-417. Camps 1984, 185-186 suggests the mausoleum was perhaps of Nubel, himself. Other fortified sites in the region include Dra Zeg et Ter: AAA 5,67; Akbou: AAA 5,75; Taksebt des Ouled Said: AAA 5,78; Diar Mami (*Castellum Tulei*): AAA 6,14, cf. *CIL* VIII 9005 & 9006; El Ksar mta Bent es Soltane: AAA 6,89. Most were probably chieftainly castles or defended civilian settlements, like *Castellum Tulei*, rather than military sites.

81. Ksar Chebel: AAA 6,110, Vigneral 1868, 59-62, Mercier 1885, 354, Cagnat 1913, 642, Février & Baghli 1968, 13-15 = AE 1969-1970, 727. The dedication was erected by a centurion, Aelius Primus, in honour of the procurator Publius Aelius Classicus, with the apparent participation of one Tyrannus or Tyrannicus, perhaps a tribal chieftain. The inscription has been dated to c.AD 100 or alternatively - and perhaps more likely - to the 3rd century.

Ksar Kebouche: AAA 6,115, Vigneral 1868, 134-136 & 161, Mercier 1886, 471-472, followed by Cagnat 1913, 642-644, cf. Salama 1980, fig.7 (map facing p.134), where Kebouche is marked as a 'defensive establishment'.

82. Tamgout d'Azazga: AAA 6,74; Vigneral 1868, 63-64; Cagnat 1913, 645-646; Carcopino 1919, 171-173, 176-177.



VII.5.3 *Limes Tubusubditani*

The Road network

Immediately adjacent, in Mauretania Sitifensis, the *limes Tubusubditani* based on the Augustan colony of *Tubusuctu* (Tiklat near El Kseur) lay at the hub of a network of important roads. One ran along the Soummam-Sahel valley from the coast into the interior of Caesariensis. The east-west cut-off through the Grande Kabylie via *Bida*, described above, commenced at *Tubusuctu*. Eastward, a route ran down the Soummam-Sahel to the coast where it forked to reach, on the one hand, the equally ancient colony and port of *Saldae*, and on the other, to continue eastwards along the coast, linking the ports of *Muslubium*, *Choba* (Ziama) and *Igilgili* (Jijel). From *Muslubium* (Andriach near Sidi Rehane) a road led across the Petite Kabylie range to *Sitifis*. This formed the shortest route connecting the provincial capital and the imperial estates on the High Plains of Sétif with the coast. A second route crossed the Petite Kabylie to link *Sitifis* directly with *Tubusuctu*.⁸³

Muslubium-Sitifis

The *Muslubium-Sitifis* road was clearly of some importance. The shipping corporation - *naviculari(i) Mu[s]llu[vit]a[ni]* - is recorded in one of the mosaics in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni at *Ostia*, whilst the site is denoted *Muslubio horreta* in the Peutinger Table, *Mulusbion orea* and *Musluvion orea* in the Ravenna Cosmography. This would seem to indicate the presence of large storehouses at the port, for the transshipment of produce from road to sea, and considerable traffic across the Petite Kabylie. The likely source of this traffic was the vast imperial estates on the high plains south of Sétif, and its motivation was almost certainly fiscal. Six km south of *Muslubium* where the road crossed the pass of Tizi-K'frida, it was protected by a *Centenarium Aqua Frigida*. The fort is known through the survival of the dedicatory inscription attesting its reconstruction *ad meliorem faciem* by Aurelius Litua in 293. The descriptions of Pouille (1879-1880, 258-259), Mercier (1888, 135-136) and Gsell's *Atlas* suggest there were at least three fortifications in the Tizi-K'frida. It is not clear which was the site of the *centenarium*, the inscription itself being found reused in the masonry surround of a nearby spring, Tala Aizraren (Tala K'frida in the *Atlas*). The most likely candidate is probably the 'fort' on the ridge of Ablat Amellal, which dominated the pass. Mercier identifies a further three posts as protecting the *Muslubium-Sitifis* road, although these have to be viewed with a degree

The inscription: CIL VIII 8991, revised by Gsell BCTH 1911, ccii = AE 1911, 119, further revised by Carcopino 1919, 172-173, - *turrem e ruina lapsam ex p[ro]p[ri]o accepto P[ro]p[ri]i Aeli(i) Peregrini v[er]i e[st] gregii proc[ur]atoris Aug[ustin]i(ustorum) Rusa[ri]itani restituere[nt]*.

Cf. CIL VIII 22629 = ILS 5849 = AE 1952, 15, (Ain Témouchent).

For civic militias see Appendix B.

83. For the road network radiating from *Tubusuctu* see AAA 7,27; Salama 1951 (map) and 1980, fig.7.

of caution bearing in mind the wholesale manner in which he allots a military role to any substantial ruin.⁸⁴

Petra and the Soummam-Sahel Artery

The importance of the route which heads inland from *Tubusuctu*, following the Soummam-Sahel valley, needs little emphasis. It represented the only relatively easy passage into the interior of east-central Mauretania, connecting coastal ports, such as *Saldæ*, directly with the plains of Aribis and Beni-Slimane and, via *Auzia*, with the Severan *praetentura* and the arid steppeland of the High Plateaux beyond. Consequently, it had probably formed a principal axis of advance for the Roman army during the first century.

Overlooking the valley 25 km south-west of *Tubusuctu*, near the confluence of the Oued Sahel-Soummam and the Seddouk, lay the great fortified estate centre of *Petra*. At this point the road passed through the fairly sizeable settlement of Ighzer-Amokrane. *Petra* itself was located on the opposite (south) side of the valley, crowning a spur named M'lakou, and was connected to Ighzer-Amokrane by a track and a good ford. The site is well-known. Not only is its destruction during the revolt of Firmus recorded by Ammianus:

Inter quos clades eminere fundi Petrensis, excisi radictus, quem Salmaces dominus (Firmi frater) in modum urbis extruxit,

84. The *navicularii* of *Muslubium*: *CIL* XIV 4549 nr.11 (AD 190/200), cf. Becatti 1961, 68-69 nr.93.

Centenarium Aqua Frigida: *CIL* VIII 20215 = *ILS* 6886, *Imp(eratoribus) Caess(aribus) C(aio) Aurel(io) Val(erio) Diocletiano / et M(arco) Aurel(io) Val(erio) Maximiano in/victis piis ff(elicis) Augg(ustis) et Constan[tio] / et Maximiano noblissi/mis Caesaribus T(itus) Aurel(ius) Litua / v(ir) p(erfectissimus) p(raeses) p(rovinciae) M(auretaniae) Caes(ariensis) centenarium / Aqua Frigida restituit a[t/qu]e ad meliorem faciem reforma/[vit, salvis dominis nostris multis ann]is feliciter.*

Pouille records 2 towers in the pass, one on either side of the road. These form entry 7,61 of the *Atlas*. Pouille was of the opinion that neither could have held 100 men. The description is too summary to determine whether the 'towers' were simple watchtowers or more complex tower-like *gsur* structures. The latter could quite feasibly have been labelled *centenaria*, as for example were *Ksar Tarcine* (*Centenarium Tibubuci*) and *Gasr Duib* in Tripolitania. Mercier labelled Pouille's 2 towers as forts, and notes that they were perfectly conserved at that time (1888). He added a third 'fort' which stood on the ridge, *Ablat Amellal*, overlooking the pass on the eastern side. This formed Gsell's entry 7,62. Mercier states it had been almost completely demolished. It is thus more likely to have been the source of the inscription than the still well preserved 'towers'. Pouille does not mention this site, but does say that he had been informed that 2 other ruins lay not far from the 2 towers; one, *Kherbet el-Ksar*, was large and the other, *Kherbet Merdj el-Anasser*, was small. One of these might be identical with the *Ablat Amellal* 'fort'. Alternatively, the *centenarium* may have stood beside the spring of *Tala Aizraren* (perhaps the original *Aqua Frigida* itself), which lay 300 m south-west of the summit of *Tizi-K'frida*. If so the *centenarium* must have been entirely demolished by the time Pouille visited the area (c. 1860). The region would clearly merit further fieldwork to attempt to resolve these problems.

The 3 additional sites mentioned by Mercier 1888, 135-136 are incorporated in the *Atlas* as 7,58 (*Ouzlime*), 7,60 (*M'sbah*) and 7,65 (*Tizi-n'Tigrount*). The first 2 cover the climb from *Muslubium* to *Tizi-K'frida*. The last lies c. 10 km south-west of the pass.

but also it has furnished a splendidly carved building inscription. This describes *Petra* as a *praesidium* and, in the double acrostic, the *praedium Sammacis*.⁸⁵

The dedication recounts, at great length, Sammac's loyalty to Rome and the services he has rendered. Given the close association of Sammac with the government, it is unlikely that the proximity of the site to a major communications artery was accidental. Such a location is, moreover, reminiscent of that of Souma. The analogy does not stop there for Sammac was one of the many 'sons' of Nubel, to whom the castle beside the Beni Aischa pass may have belonged. Thus *Petra* and Souma were probably domains of the same powerful extended family. This can hardly be coincidental. The role of these and similar sites, and the involvement of their owners, in the maintenance of internal security, is analysed in section VIII.2.

Igilgili-Sitifis

Further east another possible example of road surveillance is provided by Salama's work on the routes between *Sitifis* and the port of *Igilgili*. The importance of these roads is indicated by the landfall of the *magister militum* Theodosius at *Igilgili* in 373. The discovery of an imperial building inscription at Mechta et Terfia on the slopes of the Djebel Tamesguida may indicate the presence of a roadside fortlet there, as Salama (1980, 111-112 & 128) proposes. The inscription is not closely dateable, but clearly belongs to the Late Empire. The findspot lies within the rugged countryside of the Babors range. The lack of an associated settlement and the suitability of the terrain for banditry may lend some support to the interpretation of the dedication as deriving from a police post.⁸⁶

VII.5.4 The Role of the Later Roman Army in Mountainous Regions

85. *Petra*: AM XXIX, v, 13 for the destruction of *Petra*: 'Among such disasters outstanding were those which befell the estate of *Petra*, which its lord, Salmaces (a brother of Firmus), had built up like a city, and which was utterly destroyed.'

The inscription: CRAI 1901, 170 = ILS 9351 = AE 1901, 150; it is discussed by Gsell 1901B, 170-172 and 1903A, 22, 30 & 35. See further VIII.2.1.

The single cursory description of the archaeological remains is woefully inadequate even by the usual standards of the late 19th-early 20th centuries: Mercier 1885, 475, which is quoted by Gsell 1901B, 172 and forms the basis of AAA 6,148. Mercier's description: 'situated on a spur which commands on the north side the confluence of the Oued Seddouk with the the Oued Sahel.... traces of walls, capitals, well-preserved columns'.

The ruins at Ighzer-Amokrane (AAA 6,147) are covered in similarly brief terms, but were clearly relatively important. Mercier (1886, 474-475) thought the site large enough to merit the status of a *municipium*. It would be unwise to place too much reliance on this opinion but it is worth speculating that Ighzer-Amokrane might be the site of the *oppidum Lemfoctense* mentioned by Ammianus (XXIX v 13) as the point seized by Theodosius and used as a supply base immediately after the destruction of *Petra*. It is also recorded as a bishopric in the *Notitia* of 484: 'Vindemius Lemfoctensis' - *Not. prov. Maur.Sitif.*, 21.

86. Other possible military sites along this route include El Ksar (AAA 16,168 and Salama 1980, 106-107 & 121): 'une forteresse en grand appareil 36 m sur 25 y surveille le passage de l'Oued Arbaoun'.

The location of *limes* headquarters in such rugged areas has sustained the theory that North African mountain ranges sheltered unsubdued tribal reserves - '*L'Afrique oubliée*'. The *limites* were envisaged as barriers, institutional if not physical, penning the montagnards up in their massifs to prevent them raiding the Roman settlements in the piedmont and plains. Finally, the fortified roads themselves were thought to have been used as military lines to divide the mountain ranges, both one from another and internally. The ultimate aim of such military commands and their infrastructure was to prevent any alliance between the nomads of the pre-Sahara and the montagnards, the 'worst case scenario' of French colonial historiography. This conformed to the strategic doctrine actually followed by the French army in Algeria, '*quadrillage*', whereby the region was covered by military districts, complete with local garrisons and fortified roads, which bore a superficial resemblance to the Late Roman *limites*. It also chimes well with the current theory of '*resistance*', the belief that Africans maintained a permanent hostility towards imperial rule, particularly the montagnard tribes of *l'Afrique oubliée*. All these notions are of dubious relevance for the study of Roman Africa, products of French colonial ideology or modern nationalist revisionism rather than Roman imperial practice.⁸⁷

The above analysis has shown that there were indeed Roman fortifications within these mountain ranges. As far as can be judged from the evidence these military works were mostly small posts - police stations or watchtowers - and were particularly focussed on the road network traversing the massifs. The Mauretanian *limites* were thus clearly concerned with protecting communications through or close to mountain ranges. The 'threat' they were probably intended to confront was the brigandage endemic to the region's highlands, where it was fostered by a combination of economic under-development and the favourable terrain. It was certainly not a new preoccupation for the army. The robbery of Nonius Datus, *librator* of *legio III Augusta* in 152 on the road through the Petite Kabylie, the construction of a *burgus speculatorius inter duas vias* as a new protection for the safety of travellers' in 188 on the route through the El-Kantara pass or the ambush and murder of Gargilius Martialis near Auzia in 260 all testify to the longstanding nature of this problem in mountainous areas. Watchtowers are recorded along several routes in Caesariensis during the second and third centuries. The formation of the *limites* put such arrangements on a more systematic footing, signifying that this type of road surveillance was maintained and probably intensified in the fourth century.⁸⁸

87. The key exposition of the 'two Africas' argument is Courtois 1955, 104-126, very much the culmination of long line of French North African historical thought. For highly critical views see Rebuffat 1982, 489-490, and Février 1986A, 798-804. A more subtle view of the relationship between mountain and plain is set out by Leveau 1977A. The maps accompanying Salama's 1953/1955, 1966 and 1977 papers seem to have been drawn under the influence of *quadrillage* cf. Salama 1984, 139.

For the bibliography on 'Resistance' see Chapter I, n.16.

88. Nonius Datus: *CIL VIII* 2728 = *ILS* 5795.

Such protected road networks are only one side of the coin as regards Roman policing of mountainous regions, the passive face. In addition to supporting the networks of watchtowers and road fortlets the *limitanei* would doubtless have been used in a more 'active' fashion, for example to undertake reprisals against villages thought to be harbouring bandits. Should really serious unrest break out their bases would be available for use by the field army as it engaged in sweeps through the districts concerned. At such times the road network was important in providing the army with access to the interior of the massifs.

In this context it is significant that the governor of Caesariensis retained military authority during much of the fourth century and was eventually supplanted not by a *dux* but by a *dux et praeses*, a frontier general with the additional role of civil governor. The concentration of civil and military authority in the hands of one official is characteristic of rugged districts where internal policing and security rather than external defence was the principal problem. Notable examples are Isauria and probably Arabia in the fourth century or Egypt and much of Asia Minor during the fifth and sixth centuries.⁸⁹

The picture is complicated by the serious tribal revolts in Mauretania Caesariensis during the third and fourth centuries. It is likely that some of the internal *limites*, like the *limes Tubusubditani*, may have originated with new troop dispositions precipitated by the mid-late third century warfare. This might prompt the idea that the Roman troops were there to prevent a resurgence of unrest, conjuring up a picture of barely subdued and fiercely nationalist tribesmen, the classic image of *La Résistance Permanente* in fact. The true picture was more complex. The precise relationship between such revolts and the *limites* can only be understood in terms of the triangular links between the revolts, the tribal social environment in which they took place and the incidence of persistent banditry.

The survival of tribal communities, like petty brigandage, seems to be a marked feature of the rugged North African highlands. It is tempting to see a direct cause and effect in the persistence of these two phenomena, and therefore that

CIL VIII 2495: *burgum Commodianum speculatorium inter duas vias ad salutem comitantium nova tutela constitui* at Ksar Sidi el-Hadj, south west of El Kantara; cf. Appendix O, n.3.

For the death of Gargilius Martialis in 260 - *insidiis Bavarum decepto* - cf. Christol 1976, 74.

89. For the retention of military authority by the governors of Mauretania Caesariensis until the late 4th century (perhaps under the supervision of the *comes Africae*) see Hoffmann 1968, 241-242 and 1974, 391-392. Cf. CIL II 2110 = ILS 6116: Flavius Hyginus, *v(ir) c(larissimus) comes et praeses p(rovinciae)*

M(auretaniae) C(aesariensis); CIL VIII 9282: *nova moenia* built at El Hadjeb nr. Mouzaia (Elephantaria?) following the orders of *cuncta comitum* - a reference to some sort of collegiate defensive responsibility shared by the *comes Africae* and the *comites et praesides* of Mauretania Caesariensis and Tripolitania?; AE 1975, 882: Iunius Iunillus, a governor of Caesariensis in the 330's, directly promoted to the post of *comes divi lateris*, commander of the imperial *protectores* (?), according to *L'Année Epigraphique* and Martindale 1980, 487. If this interpretation is correct, Iunillus must have possessed considerable military competence. For the parallel situation in Tripolitania see above V.3.2 esp. n.58; see also VI.1.4 n.26.

tribal society was inherently hostile to Roman rule. However, it would be more accurate to envisage both banditry and tribalism as symptomatic of the isolation and economic underdevelopment induced by the mountainous terrain. In contrast a causal link can be posited between some revolts and brigandage, namely the catalytic effect that charismatic and successful bandit leaders had on surrounding tribal communities. This is apparent in the cases of Tacfarinas, and perhaps Faraxen.⁹⁰

A crucial factor in this process is the quality of holiness and individual prestige known as *Baraka*. If a leader was held to possess this quality then he could command wide-ranging support, since such religious charisma could legitimise cooperation by warriors from many different tribes. Moreover, it is conceivable that conspicuous daring and success in the face of the might of imperial authority would itself demonstrate some measure of divine favour. Since *baraka* was believed to radiate from the individual possessing it, bringing good fortune to those in contact with him, the potential for initially petty unrest to snowball into full scale warfare is evident. If the spark of revolt was the talent and personality of the bandit chief, its fuel was the poverty of these upland regions, which guaranteed any such figure an abundant latent reservoir of manpower. The tribal social environment, through the ideology of shared kinship, in certain circumstances enabled the mobilisation of a large proportion of that reservoir of manpower. It doubtless also helped to perpetuate a warrior ethos amongst the montagnards.⁹¹

The skill of such a leader and the failure of the Roman state to respond effectively to his daring raids would have won him a larger and larger following amongst the warriors of numerous mountain tribes, lured by the opportunity of booty and convinced of his divine favour. Eventually the threat of *razzia* against their own communities and pressure from their own kinsmen would either destabilise the existing leadership of the surrounding tribes or induce them to seek an alliance with the bandit and emulate his bravado by launching raids themselves. The combination of protection payments from agricultural communities in the plains or travellers through the mountain ranges, which could be conceived of as a kind of taxation, and his personal authority over a wide tribal alliance would enable the more astute of these charismatic leaders to carve out a statelet for themselves. This was perhaps one of the processes which lead to the formation of

90. See Shaw 1982, 40-42 for an interesting analysis of Tacfarinas' revolt, characterising Tacfarinas and his men as Gaetulians who had served as auxiliaries in the Roman campaigns against the Garamantes and Nasamones etc., turning to banditry to survive when the campaigning was terminated. However, he perhaps fails to stress adequately the extent to which neighbouring tribal communities, notably the *Musulamii*, were drawn into the conflict. The *Musulamii* were particularly vulnerable to such attraction since they were in the process of incorporation into the directly administered province. It was thus in part at least one of the first generation revolts so characteristic of Roman expansion, for which see Dyson 1971, and 1975, also Isaac 1990, 56-60. In this it differs from the third century warfare in Caesariensis. For Faraxen see *CIL* VIII 2615 = *ILS* 1194, *CIL* VIII 9047 = *ILS* 2767, cf. *CIL* VIII 20827 = *ILS* 3000, and Christol 1976 for the most convincing interpretation of these events.

91. Analysis of *Baraka*: Gellner 1969; Mattingly 1984, 129-130; Dunn 1977, 43.

the Moorish kingdoms within the territory of Vandal Africa during the fifth century.⁹²

The work of pacification, after the warfare of the mid-late third century, would perhaps have required the presence of troops for a generation or so. Thereafter, the military deployment, in the areas which had been the focal points of unrest, was perhaps, strictly speaking, unnecessary. However, that presence had been institutionalised, in the form of *limes*-sectors. Troops were retained in the mountainous districts, doubtless partly through administrative inertia, but more especially because they served a useful purpose in policing the roads and suppressing banditry. After the third century, army commanders were perhaps more aware that small outbreaks of unrest could grow to alarming proportions, and appreciated the importance of a vigorous response by the state in preventing this.

As far as can be ascertained the army was largely successful in this role. The next serious warfare encountered in the sources, the revolt of Firmus, had very different causes, as Ammianus Marcellinus' extensive coverage makes clear. They were to be found in the high politics of the province where a power-struggle involving senior tribal leaders and the *comes* was taking place. In this case the presence or absence of *limites* was largely irrelevant in preventing it.

The absence of fierce tribal warfare in similarly mountainous terrain in southern Numidia during the third and fourth centuries represents a highly useful control for this theory. The Aurès Mountains, like the Mauretanian ranges, were apparently the lair of highwaymen, necessitating the construction of *burgi speculatorii*, and, during the Late Empire were still home to small tribal communities. However, no bandits became the figurehead for a wave of tribal unrest in the massifs of southern Numidia. Indeed, watchtowers apart, there is little evidence of any problems in this area. The prolonged fieldwork in the Aurès and Nementchas, conducted mainly by Pierre Morizot, has identified well-built masonry farms, and Latin epitaphs, sometimes recording military service, all along the mountain valleys. Little evidence of military presence or official concern has been revealed, other than a handful of legionaries acting as policemen at Menaa. Isolated veterans can be found in living in retirement, just as elsewhere, indicating little fear for personal security.⁹³

92. Shaw 1984B, 51, for the role of bandits in establishing new states. For the zattata tolls exacted by tribes in the Moroccan High Atlas on merchants using the mountain passes during the Modern era see Maxwell 1983, 44 & 47; Dunn, 1977, 116-117; Porch 1987, 161. For the Moorish kingdoms see Courtois 1955, 333-352; Pringle 1981, 13-16; Camps 1983 (1985) and 1984; Février 1988; Morizot 1989.

93. Settlement in the Aurès/Nementchas: Alquier 1941, Birebent 1964, Morizot & Morizot 1948, Morizot 1974-1975, 1976, 1977-1979, 1979 (overview), etc, and Leveau 1974-1975. See also above IV.2.3.

These results echo those of other mountain zone fieldwork, for example that undertaken Leschi (1941B), in the Guergour north-west of Sétif, by Laporte (1985), in the Grande Kabylie. Most notable of all is the inspired work by Leveau in central Caesariensis (around Cherchel, and in the Bou Maad, Zaccar and Dahra ranges); see 1970, 1972, 1975, 1977B and 1984. Romanised farms, doubtless the domains of the urban aristocracy, can be found in considerable numbers in the hills surrounding Caesarea. Together these

The reason for this lack of unrest in the Aurès is surely that military response was always far swifter and more decisive in that region because the headquarters of the senior, African, military commander was near-by. A policing requirement in the Aurès, was more likely to come to the attention of a senior officer straight-away, and there were always sufficient troops available to respond adequately. This was the case both during the Principate, when the legate resided at *Lambaesis* with *legio III Augusta*, and during the Late Empire when the *comes Africae* probably occupied the same general area with much of his field army. Moreover, in both periods the bulk of the second rank troops - auxiliaries or *limitanei* - were also based fairly close by, to the west and south of the Hodna-Aurès-Nementchas. Though largely fortuitous, a result of military advance slowing down after the Aurès had been incorporated, this nevertheless meant that no bandit was able to achieve sufficient success or renown to attract wider support. Such Later Roman fortifications as can be identified on the edge of the Aurès-Nementchas were built to enable the army to perform routine policing requirements, as argued in Appendix O, not to blockade the montagnards in their massifs.

It is thus clear that the *limites* of Mauretania did not form barriers to confine rebellious tribes within their mountain ranges, nor were roads used to divide one massif or *gens* from another. Roads, even when provided with watchtowers, simply cannot perform such functions. Roadside watchtowers are most effective in helping to protect people travelling *along* the road, where the objects of surveillance - travellers - can be kept under continuous observation. It would have been much more difficult to detect small groups slipping *across* the line of the road, even during daylight, unless the towers were associated with some form of linear barrier, or were very closely spaced indeed (which would have been expensive in manpower). Moreover at night highway towers would have been largely useless in such a role but could still serve to protect travellers by giving overnight shelter to those caught in the open as darkness fell. Ironically, the French army itself eventually came to recognise the dubious efficacy of *quadrillage*, during the Algerian War, disillusioned by the strategy's enormous demands on manpower and its limited success. *Quadrillage* was then replaced by a more effective policy of concentrating troops in campaigns against each major centre of resistance in turn.⁹⁴

Above all there were no independent tribal strongholds in the mountainous interior of Mauretania Caesariensis. The survival of tribal society is certainly a marked feature of that area, but this is surely due to the socio-economic impact

surveys have fundamentally altered our understanding of settlement in the mountain ranges. No longer can these be seen simply as sparsely inhabited tribal reserves. The presence of olive farms and the like suggests that, far from being 'forgotten', the mountains experienced the same economic and social forces as the rest of the region.

94. Safrai 1971, 229, Isaac 1990, 182 for the classic description, from a Talmudic source, of a traveller being offered shelter for the night in a *burgus*.

OUED OUERK

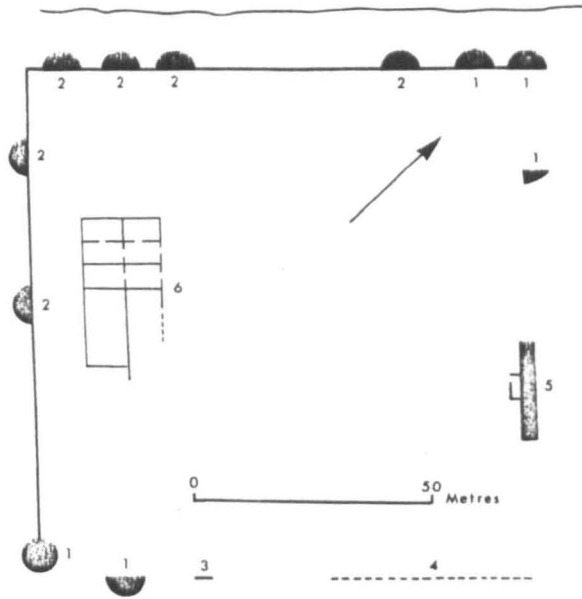
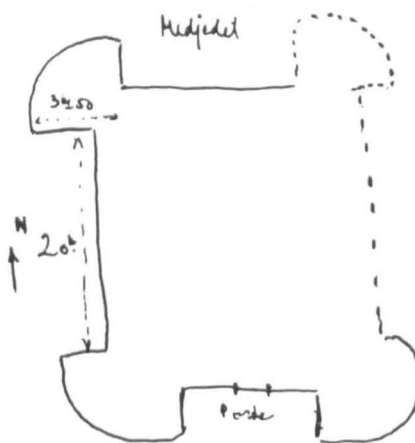


Fig. 66.1 Ruines de l'oued Ouerk, d'après A. Joly
(Archives du Service des Antiquités de l'Algérie).

1. Fondations de tours nettes
2. Fondations un peu confusés
3. Portion de mur antique conservé
4. Débris de mur
5. Mur épais de 3 m
6. Fondations de chambres

Ferme Romanette

(after Benseddik 1980)



Medjedel

(after Salama 1991)

of the rugged environment rather than any protection the latter afforded from the Roman army. There is no reason to suppose that the revolts of the third-fourth centuries were not successfully suppressed and the tribes completely pacified in the aftermath. Indeed, the analysis of the Late Romano-Moorish tribal communities in Chapter IV makes it clear that, like the cities, they were fully integrated into the administrative and social structure of the province. Nor is there any need to evoke 'African' tribesmen fiercely imbued with desire to resist and expel the alien 'Romans' long after their initial incorporation into the imperial state. That particular concept of nationalism belongs to the modern world.⁹⁵

VII.6 THE EDGE OF EMPIRE AND BEYOND

So far it has been concluded that military roads were neither frontier lines nor defensive barriers, but simply roads, whilst linear barriers were devices to control movement, impose authority and prevent small scale raiding, but were not demarcated boundary lines. It is now possible to begin to answer the question of what actually did constitute the imperial frontier. This issue may throw into starker relief by looking at two areas, first one where no military presence would be anticipated, but is nevertheless present, and secondly one where frontier defences would be expected, but seem to be largely absent.

VII.6.1 The Saharan Atlas and the High Plateaux

In Chapter VI the possible existence of fan-shaped angle towers, implying Late Imperial military activity, was noted on the fortlet of Medjedel in the Saharan Atlas. The possibility that the remains at Ferme Romanette, to which attention has been drawn by Benseddik (1980), were those of a Late Imperial fort was also proposed. This focusses attention on the question of a continued Roman presence in the Saharan Atlas and the High Plateaux, areas traditionally considered to have been abandoned at the beginning of Gordian III's reign.

It has been argued that one of the campaigns undertaken by Theodosius the Elder took place in the Saharan Atlas, or in the Hodna region, namely that undertaken when Firmus sought refuge with the *Abanni* and *Caprarienses*, who lived close to the *Aethiopes*. A *civitas Contense*, 'a lofty and concealed fortress', and a *municipiumense* are mentioned. Their existence would obviously be highly significant if the campaign could actually be located in the Saharan Atlas with confidence. However, none of the peoples or places can be firmly identified, so the passage cannot be used as a basis for further conclusions.⁹⁶

95. That is not to say that African tribesmen did not fight bravely in the face of Roman expansionism. First generation revolts, during the painful and disorientating process of incorporation, should be bracketed alongside that initial resistance rather than being seen as indicative of longer term hostility.

96. AM XXIX v 34-39. See also sections IV.2.4-5.

A little firmer ground is reached with the archaeological evidence. At El-Gahra the pottery continues into the fifth century and there are coins of the fourth century. This need not imply either a military presence or continued incorporation in the province. Pottery and coinage of the fourth century continued to reach *Volubilis* and surrounding sites, albeit in very much reduced quantities, after the official withdrawal from that part of Tingitana; likewise Gheriat el-Garbia and Bu Ngem in southern Tripolitania, after c. 260. At Gahra the Severan fort was surrounded by a walled town, like some of its counterparts on the Mauretanian *praetentura*. If early archaeological descriptions are to be believed the enceinte was equipped with projecting towers, which would indicate a structure of real defensive merit, rather than a mere boundary wall like that at Bu Ngem. It would be rash to assume that the fort was abandoned simply on the basis that no trace of military occupation is known after the reign of Gordian. Neither Gheriat el-Garbia nor Bu Ngem underwent sufficient institutional development to justify a fully-fledged circuit wall.⁹⁷

Medjedel was a very small post (20 m square) and cannot have stood alone. It must surely have been one of a string of posts, stretching back to a *limes* headquarters (*Zabi?*, *Tubunae?*). This is not so implausible. Very little is known of the more northerly posts listed by Salama, in the Saharan Atlas, sites such as Korirein, Guelaa and Bou Saada. Bou Saada, which is currently the largest and most important oasis in the region. It is difficult to imagine that it would be devoid of military presence if Medjedel was held. At Djelfa, the lettering of several epitaphs suggests Late Antique occupation there, too.⁹⁸

The posts in the Saharan Atlas are widely separated. It would be possible to argue for a frontier line running through Ferme Romanette, Medjedel, Gahra and Doucen, however, even allowing for gaps in our knowledge, the distances between these posts are surely too great for this to be a meaningful concept on the ground. The *limes* headquarters are located well to the rear of these sites on the Severan *praetentura* and in the former Hadrianic frontier zone of Numidia. It may be preferable to think in terms of each *limes* having an outpost or chain of outposts in the Saharan Atlas and the High Plateaux to serve as centres for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, as designated meeting places with tribal leaders, and secure bases for retaliatory raids. The pattern might be Ferme Romanette - Boghar (*Caput Cilani?*), Medjedel & Bou Saada (?) - *Zabi*, Gahra - *Tubunae*, Doucen & Ouled Djellal - *Gemellae*.

97. Carcopino 1924, 323-324; 1925, 145, (coins). El-Gahra: pottery, John Dore, pers. comm. Site: Daniels 1983, 12 (fig.3), 15-16, Gsell AAA 47, 1; Lassalle 1889; Carcopino 1925, 46. The latest inscription is *CIL* VIII 18026 (Gordian III). For late pottery and coinage in southern Tingitana cf. Marion 1967, 112-115 and Lenoir (E.) 1986, 240-241.

98. For Medjedel see Salama 1991, 95-97. Bou Saada: AAA 36,22; El Guelaa: AAA 36,3 add; Korirein: AAA 35,103; Djelfa: Late Antique epitaph - *CIL* VIII 8804, site - AAA 46,102; cf. Salama 1977, 584-585.

The question of what status the inhabitants of this area held is still more fascinating. The oasis settlements, like Gahra and Bou Saada, may have reverted to a federate status, of the kind recorded in the case of Ghadames during the sixth century, whether or not there was a military presence. Alternatively, some might represent isolated provincial communities, comparable to those in the Sinai peninsular, described by late sources.⁹⁹

One possible instance of the latter may be implied by the fortification noted at Ferme Romanette. The site lies 50 km south of the Mauretanian *praetentura*, on the Oued Ouerk, a tributary of the Nahr Ouassel. The *Atlas* records clear traces of Romanised settlement along the Oued Ouerk. A fragmentary inscription was discovered upstream, at Ain Smir. Benseddik (1980) suggests Ferme Romanette may have been the seat of a federate chieftain (perhaps receiving Roman technical assistance as part of a military aid package?). That notion is not implausible, but another is at least equally feasible. It is possible that the farming community along the Oued Ouerk was incorporated in the province of Caesariensis during the third century. During the Late Empire the administration may have sought to maintain its authority over the area by establishing (or refurbishing) a military post there. Such agricultural pockets played a crucial role in the economy of steppe areas and control over them conferred considerable leverage over the surrounding pastoralist tribes. Furthermore, isolated provincial communities would have been particularly vulnerable to nomadic razzias and extortion campaigns, perhaps leading to appeals for the installation of a protective garrison.¹⁰⁰

VII.6.2 Eastern Tripolitania

The dearth of military sites

In recent years an extensive programme of fieldwork has taken place along the wadis of the eastern pre-desert and the Sirtica, under the auspices of the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey. Despite this research few official military sites have been revealed in eastern Tripolitania.

Three major bases - *Tentheos*, *Mizda* and *Maccomades* - can be identified with confidence, though little is known, archaeologically, about them. The *Notitia Dignitatum* shows *Tentheos* and *Maccomades* were both *limes* headquarters. That document also contains seven unidentified or uncertain *limites*. *Mizda*, as the major crossroads in the pre-desert, was doubtless one of them. All three of the above were perhaps earlier regimental or vexillation forts which remained in use, like *Tillibari* and *Bezereos*. There are grounds for

99. The *Cidamensii* as *pacati*: Proc. Aed VI iii 9-11. For references to isolated communities in Palaestina see Isaac 1990, 93-95, 247-248.

100. Ferme Romanette: AAA 34,57, Joly 1898, Benseddik 1980, 981-983, 985-987 and see above VI.3.1 n.36. Cf. AAA 34,58 and AAA 34,37 add. (Ain Smir inscription) for other traces of Romanised settlement along the Oued Ouerk.

assigning some or all of the remaining uncertain Tripolitanian *limites*, to the eastern pre-desert or Syrtic regions, as argued in section VI.1.3. Over 350 km separate Mizda and *Maccomades*, far greater than the distances (60-100 km) between their counterparts to the west, on the *limes Tripolitanus* route. Yet no additional fort sites of the above type can be recognised in the eastern sector. Consequently there are no obvious candidates as centres for those remaining *limites*.

Similarly, only two Late Roman *quadriburgi* are known in this area, Gasr Bularkan in the Wadi Merdum and Sdada, dominating the Wadi N'f'd. At 0.05 hectares Gasr Bularkan is tiny. Sdada is considerably larger but still only covers just over a quarter of a hectare.

Some earlier military installations may have been retained in use during the Late Empire, as outposts and police stations. There is some tentative evidence that this may have been the case with the Hadd Hajar *clausura* between *Tentheos* and Mizda, as suggested above (VII.3.1). Near the eastern boundary of the province pottery as late in date as the fourth-fifth century has been recovered from the site of Gasr el-Haddadia (*Tugulis*) where a fortlet of the usual Principate style has been revealed by air photography. Again, this might imply the retention of an earlier post, though civilian settlement cannot be ruled out as a source of the late pottery. A number of fortifications recorded by the Peutinger Table along the coastal road have not been identified, it is possible some of these may have continued in use during the late empire. Equally, others may lie as yet undiscovered.¹⁰¹

Other fortlets and outposts built during the second-third centuries may also have continued to play a military role. Gasr Duib, Gasr Wames or the site at Bir Tarsin, indicated by a Severan imperial dedication, are possible candidates, though there is no direct evidence that any of these posts was still functioning in the fourth century. In addition the true nature of some *gasr* fortlets may still await diagnosis. Most of the innumerable *gsur* in the region, it is now recognised, were civilian structures, but a few may have been official military *centenaria*, built during the third-fourth centuries, like Gasr Duib. Despite the contemporary introduction of the new style of military architecture with projecting towers etc, the building of outposts in the traditional *gasr* form certainly continued into the fourth century, as evinced by the case of Ksar Tarcine and its probable associates Ksar Chetaoua and Mahalla.¹⁰²

VII.6.3 Defining the frontiers of Empire

101. Gasr el-Haddadia: Mattingly 1984, 273, 277 & 423; 1989, 137; Goodchild 1976, 157-158 & pl.53. A 'large fortress' is recorded by Goodchild (1976, 147, 166 & 193-194) on the promontary of Ras Ben Gawad, thought to be the *Zacasama praesidium* of the Peutinger Table (Seg. VIII.1). Cf. also *Praetorium* (Seg. VII.5) - another possible official site, mentioned east of Chosol = Gholala.

102. Gasr Duib: IRT 880 = AE 1950, 128; Goodchild 1976, 24-29 = Goodchild & Ward Perkins 1949, 88-92; Smith 1971; Mattingly 1984, 284-285, and 1989; Di Vita-Evrard 1991. Gasr Wames: Goodchild 1976 pl.19; Smith 1971; Mattingly 1984, 284-285. Bir Tarsin: IRT 887; Mattingly 1985A, 73 and 1989, 138.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE PRE-DESERT

TRIPOLITANIA: CHRISTIAN BUILDINGS

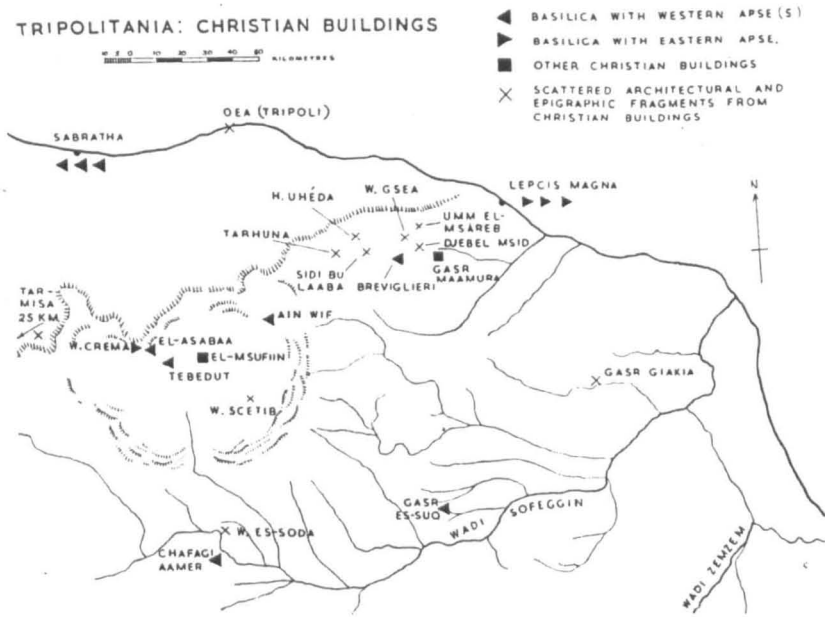
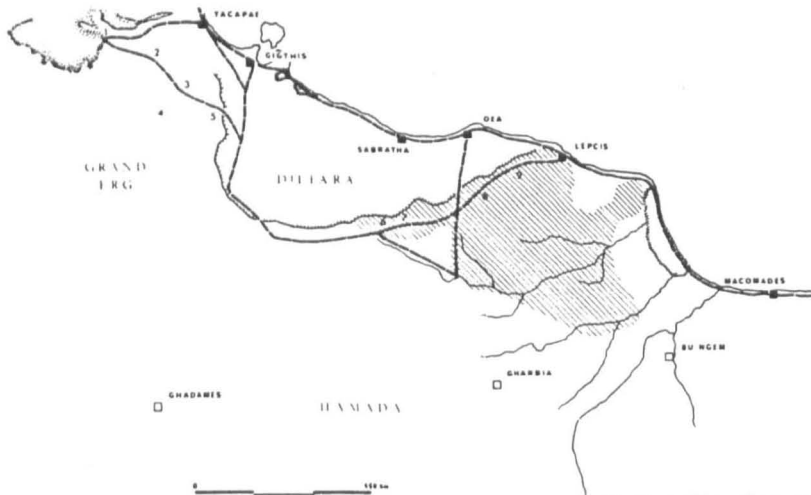
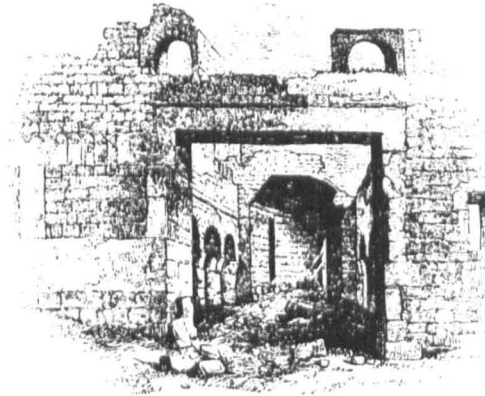


FIG. 1. Distribution of Christian buildings (see also fig. 31).

(after Ward Perkins & Goodchild 1953)

Chafagi Aamer Church



(after Février 1982)

Fig. A 1. Villes de Tripolitaine. Les numéros indiquent des sites du *limes*: 1, Turris Tamalleni; 2, Ad Templum ?; 3, Bezereos; 4, Tisavar; 5, Tibibuci (*centenarium*); 6, Zentheos; 7, Auru; 8, Thenadassa; 9, Mesphe. Partie hachurée à droite, zone où ont été trouvées des basiliques et inscriptions chrétiennes qui témoignent d'une occupation tardive (carte dressée à partir de *Libya antiqua*, t. I, 1964, pl. XLIV)

Despite the qualifications expressed above, the paucity of recognisable official military fortifications and well-defined Roman roads, delineated by itineraries or milestones, east of a line drawn roughly between Leptis and Mizda, is undeniable. One important consequence of this is the difficulty of defining the southern limit of Late Roman territory in eastern Tripolitania. This lack of precision may not be the drawback it appears. Although it is very tempting to join up the dots of Roman forts or use road lines to mark the outer limits of Roman provinces this method is surely inappropriate to the open frontiers of regions such as North Africa. Such infrastructure is certainly useful as an approximate guide but ultimately the imperial boundary was defined by the outer limits of communities subject to Roman jurisdiction. In the Tripolitanian pre-desert these communities were relatively small tribal groups - clans or sub-tribes - controlling restricted areas. The latter would comprise a well-defined agricultural core, the bed of the wadis where regular cultivation was possible, and around which settlement was focussed, combined with a much wider tract of the surrounding plateau providing grazing for the pastoral element of a mixed economy. It is obviously difficult to establish the precise boundaries of each community's grazing rights, indeed such ranges might even be shared with other groups in some cases, but this does not matter greatly. The Roman authorities needed only to know which wadi settlements were incorporated within the province. Isaac (1990, 394-401) has recently emphasised that it was the control of people, rather than territory, that the Romans attached importance to.¹⁰³

Evidence of Christianity may be of some help in identifying which communities were incorporated in the province. The relationship between the adoption of Christianity and incorporation within the Empire is noted by Augustine when mentioning some tribes in the North African frontier zone which had recently been pacified and then evangelised. The southernmost churches, or structures decorated with Christian motifs, are to be found in the wadis of the Sofeggin Basin. On this basis the sedentary communities of that area were probably included within the province, whilst those of the upper and middle Zemzem system may have lain outside, perhaps having some sort of federate status.¹⁰⁴

The hypothesis of a federate zone along the Zemzem might explain the combination of Late Roman cultural elements with paganism at the one intensively studied site in the pre-desert wadis, the important site of Ghirza in the middle Zemzem. There are clear signs of paganism at Ghirza in the shape of a temple which may have been the cult centre of the god *Gurzil*. The large amounts of fourth-fifth century pottery, the use of

103. The measures which were taken to defend and police this sector of borderland and the reasons for the different organisation are discussed in section VIII.1.

104. Christianity in eastern Tripolitania: Ward-Perkins & Goodchild 1953, esp. 50-56, and Di Vita 1967 provide comprehensive surveys; cf. also Février 1982, 379, fig. A,1. Mattingly 1987, 89-90 argues for strong Libyco-Punic pagan survival in the Tripolitanian hinterland. Pacified and evangelised tribes: Aug. Ep. 199, 46 and above IV.2.4.

GHIRZA



The North Tombs (after Jones & Barker 1979–1980)



As Viewed by Alan Sorrell (after Haynes 1965)

monetary values such as the *follis*, the Roman *nomina* of the local nobility, together with the classical stylistic elements and Latin or Latino-Punic inscriptions decorating their tombs make it clear that in all other respects Ghirza, or at any rate its social elite, fell within the cultural orbit of the Rome during the Late Empire just as much as sites further north along the tributaries of the Sofeggin.¹⁰⁵

The above hypothesis is not the only one which might explain Ghirza's cultural assemblage. There were many pagan strongholds within the Empire. In North Africa itself Augustine mentions the cities of *Calama*, *Madauros* and *Sufes* as such in the early fifth century. Thus Ghirza might conceivably have played a similar role to *Philae*, an imperial garrison station on the Nile, where paradoxically the temple of Isis was a major cult centre for the barbarian *Nobades* and *Blemmyes*. Under the terms of a treaty with the Romans the tribes were able to borrow the goddess' sacred image from the temple once every year. A second parallel is the oasis of *Augila* where the temple of Ammon had a similar relationship with the *Laguatan* of the Libyan Desert, as an oracular centre. Both these temples were closed by Justinian, a church of the Virgin being built at *Augila* indicating continued imperial control. However, there is no indication that any of the *gsur* at Ghirza had a military function, nor does a *praepositus limitis Gurzensis* feature in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, despite the relative importance of this frontier zone settlement. It is therefore unlikely that Ghirza performed the military role of a *limes* headquarters, whatever the exact political status of the site.¹⁰⁶

VII.7 CONCLUSION

In summary, a number of definite conclusions emerge regarding the uses to which the Roman army put the various elements of its infrastructure. In turn this helps to reveal the aims and activity of the army in the frontier zone.

Firstly, roads do not mark frontier lines or lines of control. They link military installations rather than form

105. For work at Ghirza see Brogan & Smith 1984, esp. 80-92 for the temple, 260-263 for the inscriptions. For Ghirza and *Gurzil*: Elmayer 1982; Brogan & Smith 1984, 36, 231-232; and Mattingly 1987, 89-90. Mattingly 1987, 86-87 considers Ghirza's social elite was 'recruited' into Rome's frontier security arrangements, with gifts, titles or stipends.

106. For a survey of the survival of paganism in the Later Roman Empire see Jones *LRE*, 938-943; *Calama*, *Madauros* and *Sufes*: Aug. Ep. 50, 91, 232.

The temple of Isis at *Philae*: Jones *LRE*, 942 & 1391. For the garrison see Jones *LRE*, 654 & 662-663, Maspero 1912, 25-27, 56-57 & 60; Van Berchem 1971; Bowman 1978, 30-31; *ND Or.* XXXI 37. The temple of Ammon at *Augila*: Jones *LRE*, 942, *Proc. Aed VI*, ii, 14-20, Mattingly 1983, 101.

The argument that Ghirza is not mentioned in *ND Occ.* XXXI is based on the assumption that it has retained its ancient name. The site may have been derived such a name by association with the bull-god *Gurzil*, see Mattingly 1983, 103 and 1987, 89-90, and Brogan & Smith 1984, 36 & 231-232. However, no settlement named *Gurza* actually appears in any classical source, though Ptolemy (*Geog.* IV iii, 11) does mention a *Gereisa* and El Bekri records pagan worship was practiced in the 11th century AD at a stone idol called '*Gurza*' (De Slane 1913, 31-32). In any case, it is possible that a *limes* centred on Ghirza was hidden beneath a broader tribal title, rather than one derived from the name of the site itself.

barriers dividing Romans from barbarians. Because of the importance of this role the roads themselves might on occasion be protected, giving the impression that they served as patrolled frontier lines. In reality, it was those travelling along the roads who were being protected not the populations living on one side or the other of the highways. Even a road like the *Nova Praetentura* of Mauretania Caesariensis, which was laid out as a single entity, should be considered a line of deployment not preclusive control.

True linear barriers consisted of walls or banks and ditches. Whether long or short, they may be equated with military roadblocks or checkpoints enabling soldiers to scrutinise traffic into and out of the provinces. Their use would have generated information on the movement and composition of the transhumant population but above all provided the army with a means of securing the recognition of imperial authority by the nomadic tribes. Their location was determined by factors associated with the surrounding terrain rather than by the need to demarcate a precise boundary line on the ground. Short barriers were erected where rugged relief restricted movement to a limited number of easily blocked routes. Longer barriers were established where the terrain might facilitate infiltration by small bands.

The Late Roman forts and fortlets, despite their changed appearance, were probably used little differently from their counterparts of the Principate. Their primary role remained that of housing a certain number of soldiers. They did not in themselves defend the frontier zone. As the literary sources demonstrate, such defence was actually achieved in the first instance by active patrolling and policing on the part of the *limitanei*, not by the latter remaining within the walls of their forts and shooting artillery at passing nomads, as some images of Late Roman frontier troops might suggest. If invasion or an outbreak of severe raiding occurred the regional commander would concentrate his forces to defeat the enemy in the field, just like his counterpart of the Principate. In this context it is significant that there were few attempts to modernise the defences of the older forts, despite their importance as regional headquarters, though they were maintained in good order as the inscriptions from Ras el-Ain, attesting the repairs between 355-360, make clear. This fact alone should urge a degree of caution regarding the intensity of the threat faced by the Roman forces in the fourth century. The new forts were perhaps built with projecting towers simply because it was the new style of military architecture. In other words they were not the fourth century counterparts of medieval castles. They were equipped to protect their garrisons against surprise attack but not to sustain a prolonged siege.¹⁰⁷

107. For comparison see Isaac 1990, 172-208, who discusses the supposedly passively defensive Late Roman fortifications in Palestine. Far from being part of a system of defence in depth the fortlets were essentially police stations intended as bases for patrolling the surrounding area and protecting communications. Like their counterparts of the Principate their location was often poor from a defensive point of view.

The arguments summarised above apply both to the pre-desert frontier zones and to the mountainous interior of Mauretania. Just as it was important to impress the acceptance of imperial authority on the transhumant tribes so it was necessary to ensure that the prestige of the state was not undermined by banditry in the mountains. Like their *praetentura* counterparts, the *limites* in the Kabylie ranges were military commands not defensive systems. They were established to police those rugged, unruly districts, not to hold back the depredations of unpacified montagnards from Romanised, urbanised plains and piedmont. In the mountains, too, the communications network, far from being a defensive barrier comprising roads, forts and watchtowers, was itself the object of protection so that travellers and in particular the representatives of the *makhzen* - soldiers and civil servants - could circulate without hindrance.

It is therefore difficult to detect anything in the foregoing which might justify Luttwak's concept of a Late Imperial strategy of 'defence in depth'. It is clear that the *limitanei* of the fourth century were deployed throughout a wide area, but it is arguable whether that zone was any deeper than the one policed under Severus, for example. It was the presence of the regional field army and beyond that the existence of the central praesental armies which lent depth to Roman strategy, not the disposition of the frontier garrisons. Even the existence of field armies does no more than echo arrangements in the Principate when the auxiliaries could call on *legio III Augusta*, and the legion itself might be reinforced from outside the region.



Figure 7:1. The survey area.

The Pre-Desert Wadis

(after Dore 1985)

CHAPTER VIII

FRONTIER POLICING AND THE TRIBAL NOBILITY

Previous chapters have examined on the one hand the African tribes and their part in the military organisation of the diocese, and on the other the function of the frontier troops and their assorted installations. This chapter draws these separate elements together by focussing on certain cases where it has been argued that tribesmen played an especially prominent role in frontier defence or policing. The examples in question comprise the *gasr*-dwelling clans of the Tripolitanian pre-desert and the Moorish chieftains of Caesariensis and Sitifensis. Associated with these two groups are numerous private fortifications, namely the defended estate centres (*praedia*, *castra* or *fundi*) of Mauretania and the enigmatic tower-like *gsur* of Tripolitania. The vexed question of what part these structures played must be addressed if the role of the tribesmen is to be fully appreciated. In turn the two high profile case studies help to build a more precise overall understanding of how African tribal society interacted with the military-official apparatus of the Late Roman state.

VIII.1 TRIBES AND *LIMITES* IN THE TRIPOLITANIAN PRE-DESERT

The sparsity of evidence for the presence of the Late Imperial army, east of *Lepcis* and Mizda, discussed in section VII.6.2, suggests there were significant differences between the military organisation in the two halves of the province. There were probably far fewer troops in the eastern pre-desert districts, the Ghibla, Orfella and Syrtica, than there were in the Jebel range and the western sectors. This contrast requires some attempt at explanation.¹

Security was probably achieved in eastern Tripolitania by recourse to the armed strength of the region's sedentary tribes, as Matthews (1976) and Mattingly (1984, 245 & 250-251, 1987, 83-88) have argued. The discussion of *gentiles* in Chapters III and IV concluded that such tribal levies usually served only as an adjunct to regular military garrisons. Nevertheless there are good reasons why the Roman authorities might have preferred to place proportionately much greater reliance on local wadi-farming communities, rather than station large garrisons in the eastern pre-desert.

The difference may have originated when the army withdrew from the oasis fort of Bu Ngem, on the southern margin of the pre-desert wadis, shortly after 260. The large fort at Gheriat el-Garbia, 200 km to the west, was quite probably abandoned at the same time. The *ostraca* from Bu Ngem make it clear that the surrounding region was untroubled during the 250's. Consequently it is likely these garrisons were redeployed somewhere far to the west, where their presence was

1. Lack of regular troops in eastern Tripolitania: Mattingly 1989, 141-143.

needed, perhaps outside Tripolitania altogether, rather than simply being relocated to corresponding sites north of their former bases. The limited security required in the immediate aftermath was probably provided by loose agreements concluded with pre-desert chieftains.²

In the following half century a growing threat did begin to emerge, a powerful tribal confederation, initially labelled the *Austuriani* and later the *Laguatan*. To confront this menace, the existing security arrangements were perhaps strengthened and formalised by Maximian, at the end of the third century. The emperor is said to have campaigned in the Sirtica against the *Austuriani*. In the customary manner he doubtless provided his force with a screen of local tribesmen, led by trusted and ambitious chiefs. It was perhaps these groups that formed the basis of ensuing permanent countermeasures, represented by commands like the *limes Mamucensis*, listed in the *Notitia*. In general, the *limites*, established throughout the African diocese during the Tetrarchy, were grounded on previous deployments. The withdrawal of the Bu Ngem garrison meant there was no pre-existing unit on which any of the new eastern *limites* could be based, in the way that those further west were, nor do sizeable forces appear to have been transferred into the area. Instead, the eastern commands may have depended for their armed strength, on earlier agreements committing pre-desert chieftains to mobilise their kinsmen in a crisis, each *limes* being focused on the territory of a wadi-farming tribe.³

The existence of a few Late Imperial *quadriburgi*, namely Sdada and the still more diminutive Gasr Bularkan, noted above, does imply that some regular troops were stationed in the area, but only in very limited numbers. Rather than being mere outposts, as would have been the case elsewhere (see VI.4.1 & 5), the modest forts presumably served as headquarters for the *praepositi limitum*, there being no other obvious candidates for the role. Other *praepositi* may have been accommodated in one or two of the *gsur* in the wadis of the Sofeggin Basin or the Syrtic pre-desert. The small garrisons quartered alongside the *praepositi*, were probably obtained by transferring detachments or composite units from better endowed commands. They may have been adequate for routine policing but any punitive operation would require the support of the local tribes, or reinforcements.

Despite their meagre resources, I would argue the *praepositi limitum* of eastern Tripolitania were genuine imperial officers. They were not necessarily all career soldiers but they were formally appointed, having specific responsibilities and a position in a clear chain of military command. Some at

2. Cohors VIII Fida, perhaps stationed at Garbia prior to 260, reappears in 263 at the newly constructed fort of Ras el-Ain some 400 km north-west; see above II.1.2.

3. Maximian in the Sirtica in 298(?): Corippus *Joh.* I 478-483, V 175-180, VII 530-533; *Pann.Lat.* IX(IV) xxi 2; cf. Mattingly 1983, 97 and Barnes 1982, 59.

The Tripolitanian *limites* were surely created around this time, very likely in the immediate aftermath of the campaign. Elsewhere in Africa, sector *praepositi limitum* are first attested at Auzia in 301, and at Tubunae in 303, see above II.2.

GASR BULARKAN



(after Goodchild 1950 = 1976)

least had authority over regular forces. However the small troop numbers involved suggest the eastern *praepositi* possessed only a limited ability to enforce their will, in the way that other African frontier commanders could. This points to a different role, perhaps closer to that of the *praefecti gentium* in Caesariensis. The *praepositi* were the principal, if not sole, representatives of imperial government in the frontier zone. They formed invaluable intermediaries with the region's tribal leadership - whose cooperation was so essential for the maintenance of security - and enabled the administration to exert some influence in the wadis. Their presence alone may have served a valuable symbolic purpose in helping to reassure the pre-desert tribes of continued imperial support, thereby preventing defection to the *Laguatan*. In effect, the *praepositi* provided a limited degree of military administration over a tribal population.

In the event of an Austurian raid, the officers could coordinate local tribal resistance, mobilising and leading counter-razzias. The small forts would doubtless serve as liaison points between the local tribes and the army. The imposing turreted aspect of posts like Gasr Bularkan, seemingly out of all proportion to their actual size, was surely designed to convey the power of Empire and assert government authority in the region. Similarly, the soldiers in garrison doubtless provided the *praepositus* with an armed retinue commensurate with the dignity of an imperial officer, when dealing with local magnates, and formed a cadre which could stiffen tribal posses.⁴

This view of the eastern *praepositurae* differs from the most recent summary of military arrangements in Tripolitania, that of Mattingly (1989, 142-143), which would deny that most were formal military posts at all. He considers them to be no more than honorary titles bestowed on local chiefs as rewards for their 'recruitment' as allies of Rome. Aside from the scarcity of recognisable late military sites, Mattingly's interpretation is founded on two pieces of evidence, firstly a section of the *Notitia* (dealt with above II.4) and secondly the Bir ed-Dreder *tribuni*.⁵

VIII.1.1 The Bir ed-Dreder tribuni

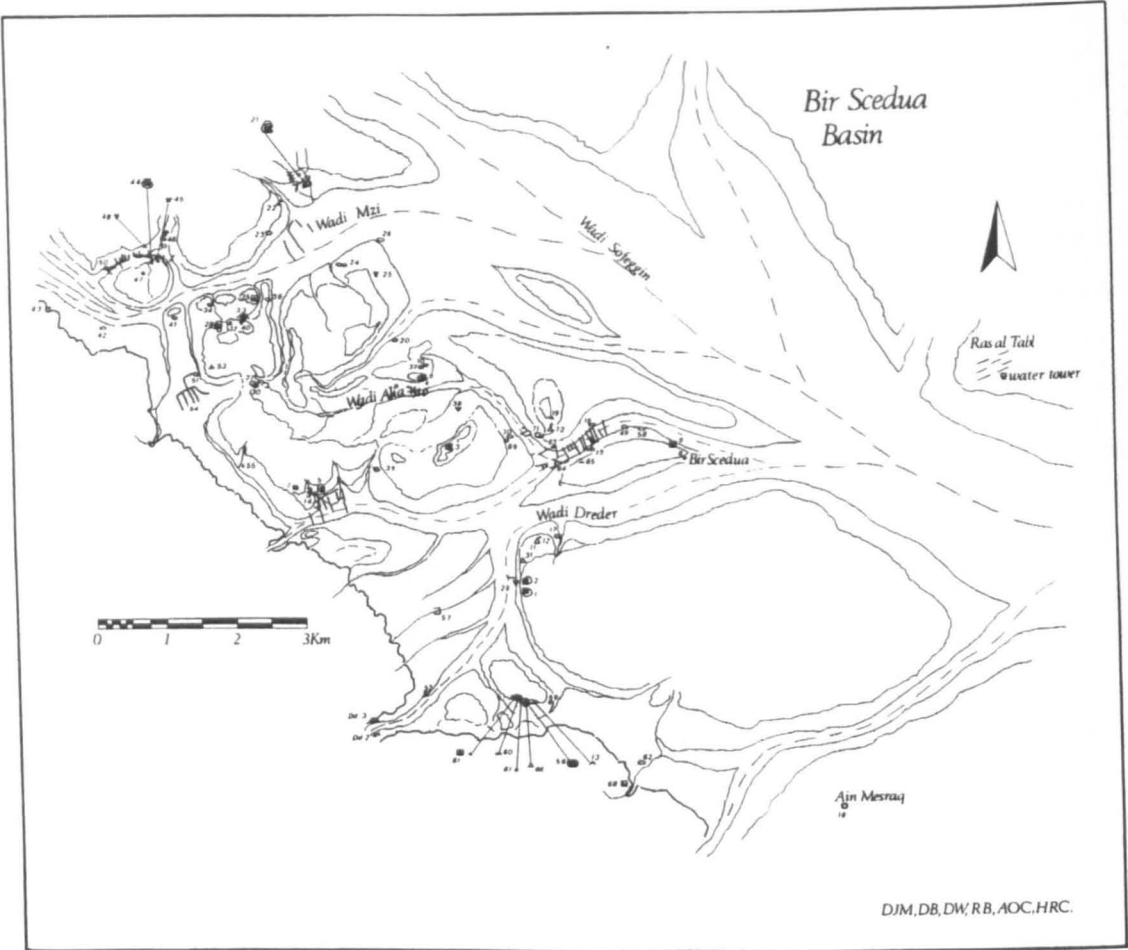
Description

The cemetery at Bir ed-Dreder in the upper Sofeggin system has produced a series of inscribed funeral stelae commemorating

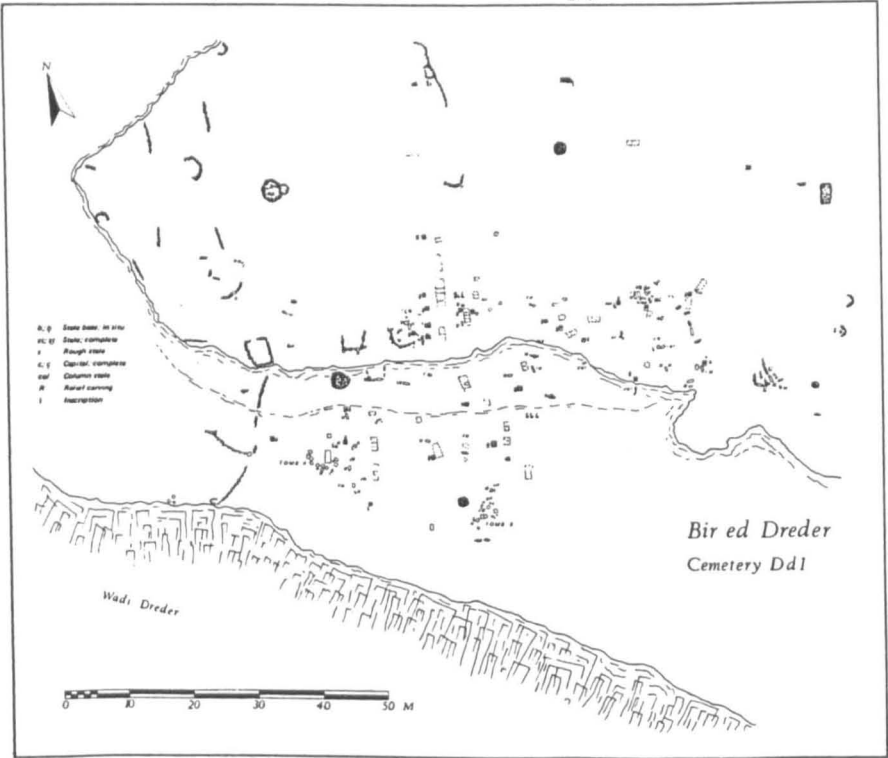
4. Note a later parallel for forts intended as liaison points, in the shape of Moulay Hassan's abortive scheme to build a series of forts near the Oued Zousfana in south-east Morocco, to serve as meeting places between the powerful pro-government Doui Menia confederation and the *makhzen* (cited by Dunn 1977, 147). Goodchild 1976, 41 = 1950, 34, for the misleadingly impressive appearance of Gasr Bularkan. Its walls, especially the turrets, may have been higher than is the case today, assuming that the common practice of using smaller rougher stonework for the upper levels was followed. Such smaller masonry was easier for stone robbers to transport (cf. Mattingly 1984, 269-271, commenting on this phenomenon at comparable sites).

5. See also Mattingly 1984, 245 & 250-251, 1987, 83-88.

BIR SCEDUA AND BIR ED-DREDER



(after Buck, Burns & Mattingly 1983)



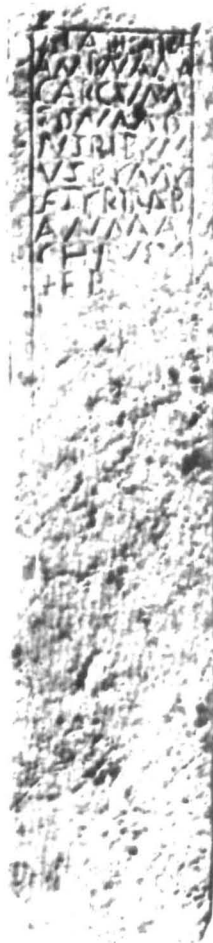
Libyan chieftains (IRT 886a-k and Goodchild 1954A = 1976, 64-69). Nine of the Latino-Punic texts incorporate the title *tribunus*. Bir ed-Dreder lies 10 km south of Bir Scedua, the nearest area of permanent settlement. Detailed study by the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey team (Buck, Burns and Mattingly 1983) has shown that numerous *gsur* in the Bir Scedua Basin possess a distinctive homogeneity 'defined by a common masonry type and shared architectural features'; furthermore, the cemeteries in the Basin contain many elements paralleled only at Bir ed-Dreder. This suggests that Bir Scedua and the Dreder cemetery formed the territory of a single sub-tribal community. The cemetery may well have served as a boundary marker defining the southern limits of that territory, and demonstrated the Scedua *gasr*-dwellers' ownership of the important wells at Bir ed-Dreder.

The latest attempt to translate these enigmatic inscriptions is that of Elmayer. His translations have identified what appear to be four dynastic lineages, apparently belonging to at least three 'tribes' ('clans' would perhaps be a more appropriate rendering).⁶

The ten *tribuni* mentioned often combine that title with another, *bymsir aban* or a variant on it such as *bmssiyrir aban*. This Elmayer translates as 'son of a prince'. It might be equivalent to the Latin designation *princeps gentis*. Certainly many epitaphs recording such tribal *principes* do emphasise their patrilineal descent. *Bymsir aban* is not a label exclusive to the *tribuni*. In particular the descendants of Chryrdiry proclaim this rank. None of this clan (the *Misairuchan*?) held the tribunate but their lengthy epitaphs do contain several Latino-Punic phrases which recur in both texts and may represent posts or honorific labels, suggesting these individuals were tribal magistrates.

The nomenclature of the Bir ed-Dreder chieftains is also noteworthy. All have thoroughly Libyan *cognomina* but many also have the Roman *gentilicia* Iulius or Flavius (sometimes rendered as Flabius). Of the *tribuni*, four were *Flavii*, whereas only one Iulius bore the title. In addition, two other tribunes, though not explicitly named Flavius, belonged to the same clan or lineage as tribunes who did bear that *nomen*. This predominance of *Flavii* may be significant for that name is well recognised, as a badge of imperial service roughly from the reign of Constantine onwards. This cannot be regarded as certain however, since both *gentilicia* are recorded elsewhere in the eastern Gebel and in the pre-desert wadis south of *Lepcis*. *Flavii* moreover appearing in much earlier contexts, suggesting that at least some bearers of that name were recipients of citizenship grants under the Flavian dynasty. The *Iulii* may likewise be the beneficiaries of first century awards. Indeed Flavius is the most common *gentilicium* encountered amongst the indigenous population of the pre-desert, which might support the idea that the bulk of the region's nobility were awarded it when formally incorporated into the province. The presence of a certain

6. See Elmayer 1983, 88-89, 1984A, 93-100, 1985A, 81-82 and 1985B, 318-319 & 329-330.



This inscription reads:

1. FLABI SAICH-
2. AM BN MA-
3. CARCUM
4. SONMO-
5. N TRIBYN
6. VS BYMY-
7. SIYRIRAB-
8. AN MACHRVS V-
9. SEB

Figure 1. IRT 886a = Goodchild 1954, Fig. 9a (1976, Fig. 18).



This inscription reads:

1. IULIVS
2. IBITVA-
3. THIF MISI-
4. (RKAR BE)N AM-
5. (RR BE)N CHY-
6. (RDID)RY B-
7. (YMYSIYR-
8. IR)ABAN BA-
9. (L SM) (SAB)ARE
10. MASADY-
11. (TH) LEMISA-
12. (IE)RVCH-
13. (AN) DNI M-
14. (SA)TYR-
15. (TH VY MY)SOR-
16. (THIM) YS SY
17. (...) BA-
18. (RR)ECILIM
19. (...) TIM
20. VSEB SYLO
21. MACHRVS
22. BEN ROGATE

(both after Elmayer 1984)

Figure 3. IRT 886e = Goodchild 1954, Fig. 13a (1976, Fig. 23).

Machrus, son of Rogatus, (perhaps as stone carver) on the stela of Flavius Saichum, son of Macarcum Sonmon, *tribynus bymysiyrir aban* and Iulius Ibitathif Misirkar, son of Amrr, son of Chirdidry, implies that the *nomina* were in use at Dreder at the same time.'

Interpretation

These enigmatic *tribuni* have prompted a variety of interpretations, in the attempt to put them into context. Goodchild (1976, 37-38, 70-71) saw them as 'tribal chieftains', appointed as 'commanders of mobile detachments' of 'semi-barbarous *foederati* who guarded the deserted regions on the extreme edge of the settled territory'. In other words the *tribuni* were regular imperial officers, albeit of local origin, but the men in their charge were irregulars who were recruited from Libyan nomads not from *gsur*-dwellers such as those of Bir Scedua. As we have seen, the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey team disputed this last point arguing for a close association between the Scedua *gsur* and the Dreder cemetery. Mattingly (1987, 85-88) further maintained that the *tribuni* were not regular officers at all but rather local chieftains, the dominant figures of the Scedua sub-tribe, upon whom honorary titles had been conferred by the military authorities, as a mark of their community's 'recruitment' into the frontier security system, as allies of Rome:

At neither Bir ed-Dreder/Bir Scedua nor Ghirza were *gsur*-dwellers recruited *stricto sensu* as "soldier farmers" or militia, but... Rome was recognising and exploiting the relative autonomy and dominance of sub-tribal groups.

Rebuffat (1977, 412-414) on the other hand put forward an equally firm case that the tribunes were simply conventional *praepositi limitum*, of the sort listed in the *Notitia* and described by Publicola, a solution also adopted by Février (1988, 146).

There is much in the ULVS-Mattingly hypothesis that is convincing. It is surely correct to view the *tribuni* as leading members of the Scedua basin *gsur*-dwellers (or perhaps their equivalent in another nearby wadi system, such as the Wadi el-Amud). The possibility that their titles were simply honorary, as Mattingly further suggests, cannot be denied. They might be rewards for services rendered, bribes for others yet to be performed or simply the result of 'knowing the right people' in the imperial administration. However, the presence

7. In addition the name of one *tribunus* has been entirely lost (IRT 886h).

For the *nomen*, Flavius, used as a status symbol and a mark of imperial service from Constantine's reign onward see Keenan 1973/1974 and 1983.

Goodchild (1954A = 1976, 70) suggested that combination of Iulius and Flavius might reflect a rise to fortune during the reigns of Constantine's sons. I am unaware of any other such use of the *gentilicium* Iulius. Flavius alone seems to have been chosen by or conferred upon soldiers and officials after the Diocletianic era. The *Iulii* might have acquired citizenship under one of the Iulio-Claudian emperors. If a later date is sought the mid 3rd century emperor, Iulius Philippus, might be the source, as suggested for the Baquatian dynasty of Iulius Matif by Frezouls (1957, 90-94) and Sherwin-White (1973, 89), but I am sceptical whether the provincial tribes (as opposed to allied peoples like the *Baquates*) were excluded from the *Constitutio Antoniniana* as those scholars argued.

of such title-holding nobles in the Tripolitanian pre-desert need not imply anything extraordinary, such as a programme of frontier diplomacy. Rather their appearance would reflect the normal operation of Later Roman society, which is marked by strenuous competition for official posts and titular rank amongst the aristocracy.⁸

Equally, the mere fact that the Bir ed-Dreder *tribuni* appear so minimally 'Romanised' is scarcely sufficient grounds for rejecting the alternative possibility that their tribunates were actual military offices (indeed the reverse might be the case since barbarians were playing a prominent role in the imperial army during the fourth century). Clearer examples in Mauretania Caesariensis demonstrate that members of the tribal elite could and did command regular units, even regiments of the regional field army.⁹

I would therefore cautiously follow Rebuffat in arguing that the Dreder *tribuni* were none other than *praepositi limitum*, especially in the light of the preceding discussion of the eastern Tripolitanian frontier commands. Publicola specifically mentions two ranks of frontier *praepositus* in Arzugitana, '*decurioni, qui limiti praeest, vel tribuno*'. The former were long service soldiers, nco's who were delegated to command of a frontier sector in the same way that, earlier, legionary centurions or cavalry decurions were placed in charge of legionary vexillations or auxiliary cohorts in the region. The tribunes were appointed by imperial letter, or codicil, issued through the *primicerius notariorum*, one of the senior palatine officials. Some were doubtless professionals commissioned after serving their time in the ranks and then the imperial officer cadets (*protectores*) but many were directly commissioned officers drawn from the regional nobility or gentry. This is echoed by Vegetius who distinguishes between a lesser tribune who rises by hard work and a greater tribune, 'appointed on the decision of the emperor by sacred letter'. Thus the same dichotomy in the origin and appointment of local commanders existed in Late Imperial Africa as during the Principate.¹⁰

The Dreder *tribuni* fall into this latter category - members of the Arzugian elite who sought posts within the regional army to bolster their authority and enhance their prestige. They probably all held the same local office, surely no further away than Mizda, but most likely in the Bir Scedua region itself. The post (as opposed to the rank - *tribunus*) is never named, probably because it was obvious to all concerned. Such localised tenure of military command is paralleled by two or three cases at Auzia in Caesariensis in the third and fourth centuries (see VIII.3.1), and there is no reason to assume that it was restricted to that area. It is entirely understandable that chieftains of the eastern pre-desert, who played such a prominent role in frontier defence,

8. For the value of rank in the Later Roman Empire see Jones *LRE*, 543-545.

9. See below VIII.3.1.

10. For the background of officers see Jones *LRE*, 641-643, citing Vegetius II, 7, on greater and lesser tribunes.

should be rewarded with military posts. As we have seen, the institution of *praepositi limitum* by Maximian simply adapted and formalised existing military arrangements. A few troops were introduced into the region but the main effect was to recognise and regularise the authority of those chieftains whose ancestors had entered into security agreements with Rome. Such men would have been best placed to fill the newly instituted official posts, having ample opportunity to bring themselves to the attention of the regional high command and cultivate influential patrons. Indeed, given the scramble for imperial posts of the Late Roman aristocracy it would be remarkable if tribal magnates in Tripolitania did not attempt to fill positions in their own backyard.

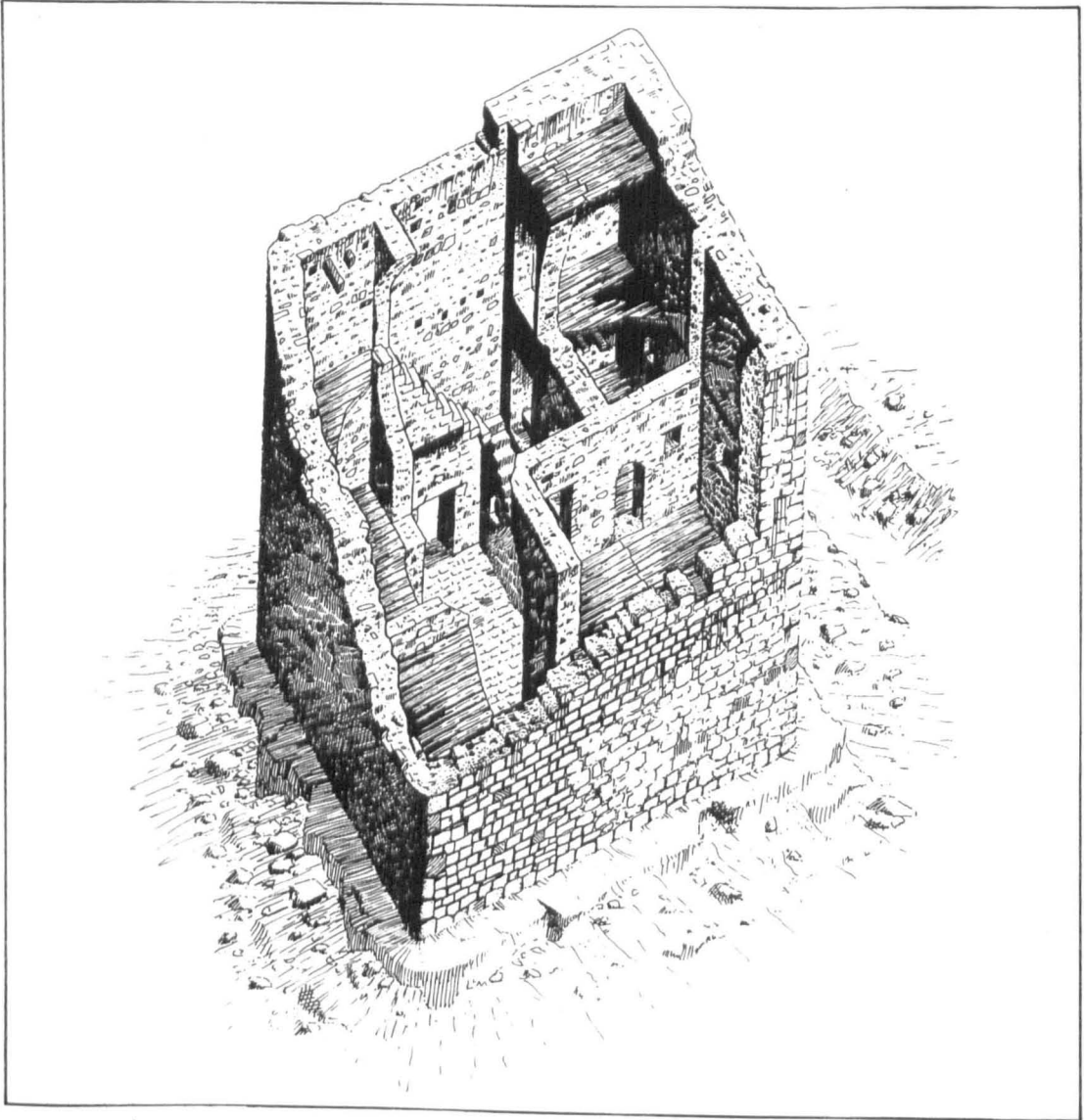
It is difficult to view the tribunate as a *carte blanche* award, which the authorities bestowed on all the senior members of the Scedua sub-tribe to mark the 'recruitment' of that group, since not all the figures commemorated on the Dreder stelae possess the title. The main pressure for the grant of the tribunate-*praepositura* came, I would argue, from the pre-desert elite rather than the imperial authorities, the post being one focus of competition amongst the local nobility. This would apply whether the title was honorary or active and accords with the picture presented by contemporary legislation, where the emperors frequently bemoan their inability to prevent illicit awards of honorary rank.

This image of vigorous local competition is confirmed by stele texts themselves. Whatever the validity of the clans or lineages identified by Elmayer's work the presence of two broad groups within the cemetery, defined by their respective *gentilicia*, is incontestable. Moreover the character of the dedications belonging to the two groups is somewhat different. The *Iulii* tend to be longer, containing several titles or honorary epithets as noted above. The *Flavii* are more concise and content themselves with *tribunus bymsir aban*. Perhaps the failure in most cases to acquire a prestigious tribunate caused the *Iulii* to compensate by listing numerous other qualities or internal tribal offices. The use of cemeteries as arenas of competition within or between social groups has been recognised by prehistoric archaeologists.¹¹

The multiple lineages or clans and the two *gentilicia* might conceivably signify that the cemetery was shared by several neighbouring communities, such as the Wadi el-Amud and/or the upper Sofeggin, thereby affirming joint ownership of the Dreder wells. However, given the close archaeological parallels between the Scedua and Dreder cemeteries it is perhaps more likely to denote division and competition within a single sub-tribe settled in the Scedua basin. The division of a single community into two different clans has been perceived elsewhere in the pre-desert, at Ghirza, where two cemeteries and two major building complexes are found. Nine

11. See Chapman 1983, 33 and 1991, discussing the Chalcolithic Varna cemetery on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Other notable examples include the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, the Hallstatt D Heuneberg royal graves, and the 'Royal Tombs' at Ur, cited by Childe 1945, 18. I am grateful to Dr Chapman for discussing these points with me.

A GASR (BS 4)



(after Buck, Burns & Mattingly 1983)

GSUR AND MILITARY OUTPOSTS

Key

A-Ras el Oued Gordab(civilian)

B-Henchir el-Gueciret(civilian)

C-Henchir Remtia (civilian)

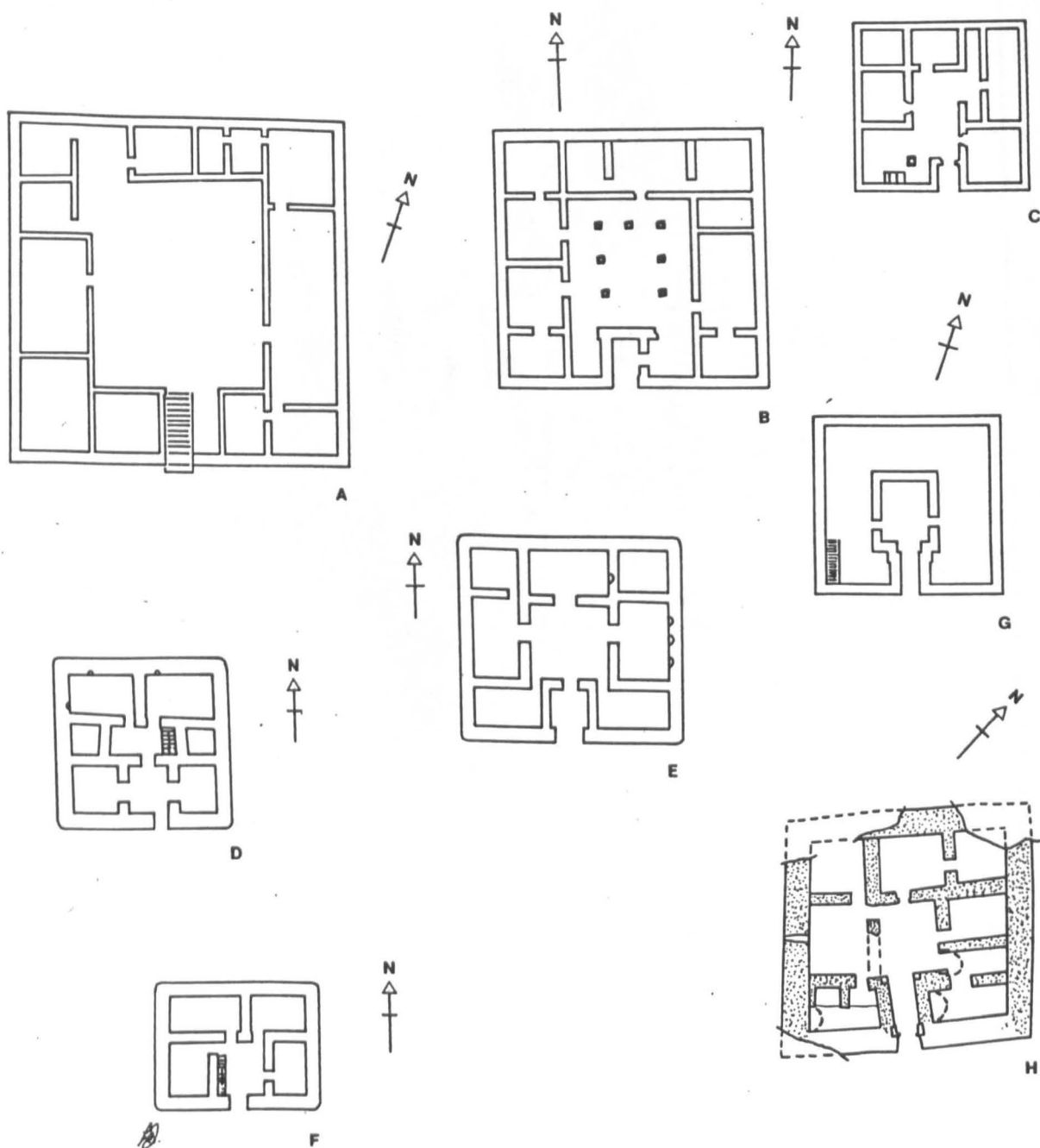
D-Bir Scedua (civilian)

E-Bir Scedua (civilian)

F-Bir Scedua(civilian)

G-Ksar Tarcine(military)

H-Gasr Duib(military)



0 15 m
0 50 ft

(after Daniels 1987)

gsur are present in the Scedua basin, each of which might represent the seat of a clan or lineage. Indeed, such division and hence balance within communities, is exactly what would be anticipated in segmentary tribal societies, where no single group or individual is allowed to gain a dominant position.

On this basis, far from indicating a loosening of imperial bonds, the Dreder inscriptions may signify a firm grip over the Scedua Basin and the enthusiastic participation of the local elite in the province's military-administrative structures.

VIII.1.2 Gsur

Consideration of the eastern *praepositi limitum* and the Dreder *tribuni* has profound implications for another important subject, namely the question of the *gsur*, the tower-like fortified farms so characteristic of Tripolitania. They dot the provincial hinterland from the border with Numidia along the Jebel range and throughout the pre-desert region. They are generally associated with sedentary agricultural systems, based on intricate floodwater utilisation schemes along wadi floors.¹²

Earlier scholars, most influentially Richard Goodchild, considered the *gsur* housed a hereditary militia of soldier-farmers, as outlined in the introductory chapter. More recent research, most notably the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey, has recognised the essentially civilian character of the vast majority of these buildings and their place at the head of a rural settlement hierarchy, functioning as the seats of clans or landed magnates. Only a small minority were official military sites, serving as small police stations, for example Gasr Zerzi, Gasr Duib and Ksar Tarcine.

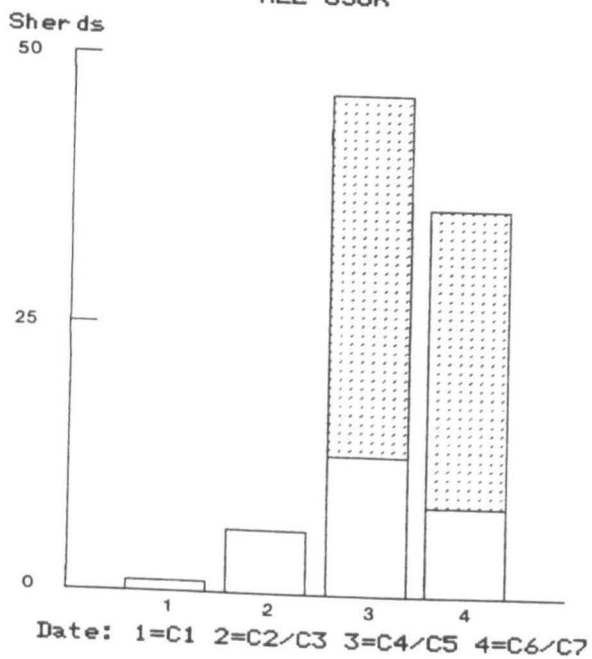
The civilian and private status of most *gsur* is eloquently symbolised by Henchir el-Gueciret in the Jebel Matmata of western Tripolitania. One of the larger and more elaborate examples of its class, with a colonnade surrounding the internal courtyard, its elaborately carved gateway was surmounted by a fine Latin inscription. Beginning 'in his *pr(a)ediis*' the inscription proclaims that the *turris* was intended for the private enjoyment ('*vivant senescant*') of its aristocratic owners M. Manilius Ingenus and Arellia Nepotilla and their descendants. The *turris Maniliorum Arelliorum* was built, or rebuilt, by a dependent labour force of masons and carvers, under the direction of Arellia's land-agent, a slave or freedman, Arellius Vitalis.¹³

12. A useful summary of Tripolitanian settlement types, including *gsur*, can be found in Jones 1985, cf. also Buck, Burns & Mattingly 1983, 44 fig.4 for an isometric view of one of the Bir Scedua group. For the possible evolution of military *gsur* cf. Smith 1971. Troussset 1974, 136-139 and individual site references for comparable sites in the western part of the province.

13. Henchir el-Gueciret: Troussset 1974, 85-86 (site nr 86), Pericaud & Gauckler 1905, 259-269; for a useful comparative plan of several *gsur* of Tunisian Tripolitania cf. Troussset 1974, 137, fig 16. The inscription: CIL VIII 22774, Troussset 1974, 86: *Maniliorum -- In his pr(a)ediis, M. M(anilius) Ingenus v(ir)*

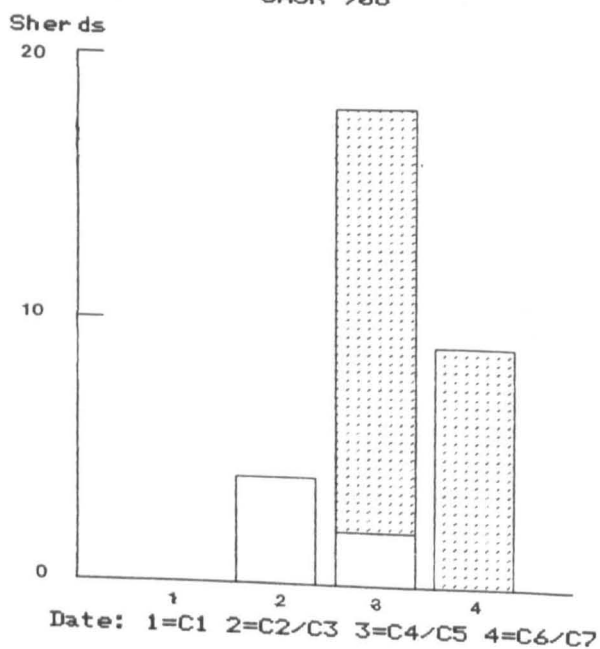
GSUR - Pottery

WADI UMM EL KHARAB
ALL GSUR



AFRICAN
TRIPOLITANIAN

SUQ EL AWTY
GASR 906



(after Dore 1990)

Despite this progress many problems remain. Architecturally, military and civilian *gsur* are virtually indistinguishable and in the absence of an explicit official or private building inscription it can often be difficult to identify securely which category any particular site belonged to. Furthermore, the origins of civil *gsur*, the reasons why they were adopted, supplanting the undefended courtyard farms of the first and second centuries, and the chronology of that adoption remain unclear. Most recent analysis of the ULVS pottery, though still tentative, would suggest that certain courtyard farms may have been acquiring some *gsur* elements by the late second century, but conventional free-standing *gsur* do not appear until the third century. Nor is it clear how early in the third century or in what strength the *gsur* are manifested, only that the type was present by the end of that period. Military *centenaria-gsur* can at least be shown, by dedicatory inscriptions, to span the third century, but the type may well continue later (like their civilian counterparts) and begin much earlier. Thus it is uncertain to what extent *gsur* had already become established at the head of the pre-desert settlement hierarchy by the late third-early fourth century. Nevertheless it is intriguing to attempt to calculate the implications for *gsur*-settlement of the military-administrative arrangements discussed in the preceding section.¹⁴

We have seen that there were few official posts in the wadi zone when the *limites* were instituted, earlier military dispositions having been focussed further south in the oases of Gheriat, Bu Ngem and the Giofra. Instead, the *praepositi* were perhaps expected to obtain whatever accommodation was necessary, for themselves and any troops at their disposal, from the neighbouring communities, either by means of billeting or by ordering the construction of a new *centenarium*. Once again, CTh VII xv 1 springs to mind, with its stipulation that tribesmen in the frontier zone should sustain the *limes* and its military infrastructure.

It is not difficult to imagine how this could have led to some blurring of distinction between civil and official, when local chieftains filled the office of *praepositus*. Such notables may have chosen to provide quarters from their own resources (and the salary awarded them by the government) to win the favour or avoid the opprobrium of their kinsmen and neighbours. If *gsur* were already an established part of the settlement pattern, chieftain-*praepositi* would doubtless have used their own *gsur* for such purposes.

d(evotissimus) et Arellia / Nepotilla h(onesta) m(atrona) uxor eius et filii nepotes pro/nepotesquae eorum vivunt senescant et melio/ra perficiant; turris perfecta disposition[e] eorundem / per instantia(m) Arelli Vita[li]s ser(vi) act(or)is eorum, instruenti/bus a solo Rufi[no?] ri...e, Senecione quad(ratario) et sig(natore?), amatores domus eorum. -- Ar(e)l(l)iorum. For recent studies placing the site in its social context see Shaw 1984A, 170-171; Mattingly 1987, 81 & 84-85.

14. I am extremely grateful to John Dore for discussing the ULVS pottery and its implications for *gsur* chronology with me. For the most recent published account see Dore 1988 & 1990.

More intriguing, however, is the possibility that the conferral of military authority on local men acted as a catalyst, sparking off the erection of *gsur* by the pre-desert nobility. The later third century chieftains, with whom Rome negotiated defensive agreements and who were later appointed *tribuni*, may have been the first to construct *gsur* on their own account, using such buildings not only as official bases but also to symbolise their newly acquired rank. In some cases the provider perhaps retained possession of the *gsur* when he relinquished command, treating the building as personal property. Of course only a very few pre-desert *gsur* would ever have housed *praepositi* in this way, but their existence may have been sufficient to spark off the construction of private *gsur* by neighbouring Libyan magnates, the process gradually snowballing from there.

The very finely built group of *gsur*, of which Gasr Isawi in the Wadi N'f'd is perhaps the best known, might represent one of the very earliest reflections of the process suggested above. The possibility that Isawi, for example, was the seat of a third century chieftain with whom Rome had negotiated security agreements, would help to explain the combination of strategic location and agricultural features that has long perplexed archaeologists. Perhaps also relevant in this context is Gasr Wadi el-Bir, in the Upper Sofeggin, built by the landowners Flavius Dasama and his son Macrinus 'to guard and protect the whole zone' (if Elmayer's translation of the Latino-Punic dedicatory inscription - IRT 889 - is correct). Sites where *gsur* were closely associated with churches, for example Suk el-Oti and Chafagi Aamer, could conceivably fit into this same framework. It is tempting to see in such centres the twin pillars of Later Roman official presence in the Tripolitanian frontier zone, namely military administration and ecclesiastical organisation, both devolved onto the shoulders of leading tribesmen.¹⁵

The great attraction of these buildings is accounted for by the underlying pressures facing pre-desert society, notably worsening security in the third and fourth centuries, with the rise of the *Laguatan*, and perhaps increasing competition for water, grazing and agricultural resources amongst the wadi-farmers themselves. In this increasingly hostile and competitive social environment the *gsur* type of dwelling - readily defensible yet also well-adapted to the climatic conditions - was markedly superior to the preceding courtyard farm. Moreover it conformed to a long-standing Libyan cultural tradition of using tower storehouses, recorded by sources as far back as Diodorus Siculus and Sallust. A factor of at least equal importance for the Romano-Libyan elite, I would argue, was the power and authority which the *gsur* symbolised, as a consequence of the army's association with *gsur*-fortlets, which would have invested the building type with official status, what one might term 'the aura of the *makhzen*'. It may be assumed that possession of *gsur* conferred

15. For further discussion of the Isawi *gsur*-type and of *gsur*-church complexes see Appendix J.1 & 3. For interpretation of IRT 889 see Elmayer 1983, 90-91, 1984B, 149-150, & 1985A 82-83; cf. also Février 1988, 146 and Appendix H below.

great prestige on their occupants and that their construction was a focus of rivalry in Late Antiquity. The above hypothesis helps to explain how the elite of rural Tripolitania managed to gain access to that potent status symbol in the first place.¹⁶

VIII.1.3 Conclusion

The extensive reliance on tribal levies rather than military garrisons, depicted above, need not signify any marked erosion of imperial authority. Large forces had **never** been stationed in the pre-desert wadis. In earlier periods military units were based either in the Gebel range or in the few sizeable oases of the pre-desert, rather than in the wadi-zone. One likely determinant is surely the availability of an adequate water supply. In the wadis surplus water resources could sustain police outposts but not large garrisons.

The rise of the *Austuriani/Laguatan* confederation necessitated some form of defensive arrangement in the pre-desert wadis. In particular *Lepcis Magna* was vulnerable to attack from the Syrtic hinterland to the south-east, where the *Austuriani* were established, without some form of military screen. To have attempted to maintain large garrisons of regular troops in the wadis would have been very costly, would have encountered problems of supply, and doubtless would have caused great disruption for the farming communities of the region. Instead, a framework of military commands was created which probably relied on the warrior resources of the regional tribes. These *limites* provided an official presence and an element of imperial administration in the pre-desert. Most importantly, the prospect of holding office helped to tie the local elite to Rome. This did not of course establish a preclusive defensive shield for the region but it was a practical and economical response to this problem. In any case the relevance of Luttwak's notions of preclusive defense to the vast sparsely populated expanses of the North African frontier zone is questionable.¹⁷

The failure of such defensive measures during the reigns of Jovian and Valentinian I is well-known. It is nevertheless curious that this should have provoked theories of treachery and collusion between the frontier's tribal defenders and assailants. The inability of scattered frontier garrisons to withstand a major attack is generally conceded, and consequently the collapse of other Late Imperial frontiers has not caused historians to conclude there was treachery on the part of its defenders (unless there is specific ancient

16. For towers as a traditional element in African architecture: Diodorus Siculus III xlix 3, Sallust *BJ* LIV 6, LXXXVII 1, Caesar *B. Hisp* VIII 3; cf. Gsell *HAAN* V, 144 & 240, Grimal 1939, 52-56, Whittaker 1978, 335. Some of these towers may represent *eperon barre* sites, but it is not clear what sort of towers were in use in the oases, giving rise to names like *Turris Tamalleni*.

17. Even Mattingly (1984, 189, 194-195), who considers preclusive security was maintained during the late first-third centuries, admits that the frontier was not patrolled or monitored in detail everywhere; large areas of impenetrable massif and waterless desert were almost totally ignored and the policing work of garrisons concentrated on certain key locations.

MAURETANIAN CASTLES



The Petra Dedication

(after Camps 1984)



A. Fontemaigne, Edite., Paris

Ksar el-Kaoua

(after Gsell 1901A)

evidence to this effect). It is surely the assumption that Libyan tribesmen, ought to have made a common cause with their 'barbarian' kinsmen and begun to secede, which has been most responsible for such notions of collusion; an assumption perhaps influenced by the recent struggle for liberation from European colonialism.¹⁸

VIII.2 CHIEFTAINS, CASTLES AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN MAURETANIA

The second case study nicely compliments the preceding discussion. The structural and epigraphic record is reinforced by a good historical source, Ammianus Marcellinus, who sheds a great deal of light on the tribal society of Late Imperial Mauretania and on one powerful lineage in particular - the House of Nubel. This provides a different perspective from the archaeologically driven research in the Tripolitanian pre-desert.

In sections VII.5.2 and VII.5.3, attention was drawn to the location of two fortified estate centres, Souma and *Petra*, beside major routes, in the Grande Kabylie and Soummam-Sahel valley, respectively. These form a useful starting point. Both these castles, belonged to members of the same noble dynasty, that of Nubel. Another Moorish notable, Masaisilen *ex praefectus gentis*, was encountered building a *centenarium* close to the *Bida-Rusguniae* highway. What was the role of these fortifications and the Berber chieftains associated with them?

VIII.2.1 Petra and Souma

The site of *Petra* was identified by the discovery of the fine dedicatory inscription which revealed that *Petra* was a *praesidium* located on the *praedium Sammacis*.

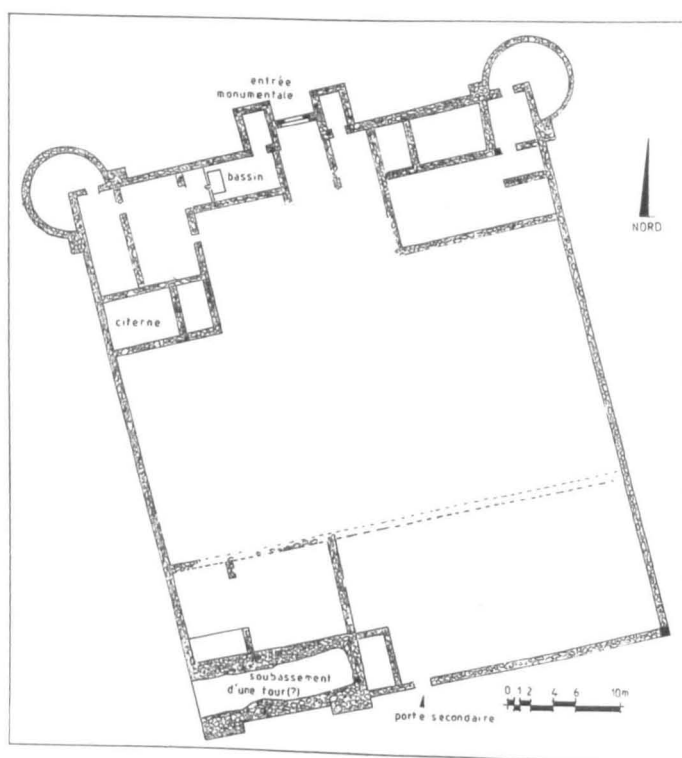
Praesidium aeternae firmat prudentia pacis,
rem quoque Romanam fida tutat undique dextra
amni praepositum firmans munimine montem,
e cuius nomen vocitavit nomine Petram.
Denique finitimae gentes deponere bella,
in tua concurrant cupientes foedera, Sammac,
ut virtus comitata fidem concordet in omni
munere Romuleis semper sociata triumphis.

18. Examples of collusion arguments: Goodchild 1976, 31 & (Reynolds) 112; Mattingly 1987, 88-89, 90-91. Reynolds, in Goodchild 1976, 112, points to the *incursi[o]ni barbarorum seu gentilium*, mentioned by a private estate building inscription from Sidi Sames in the Gebel Tarhuna (IRT 871, revised Goodchild 1976, 111-112). It is surely more likely that the two terms, *gentiles* and *barbari*, were synonymous in this case - both signifying 'barbarian tribesmen' - and were juxtaposed simply for greater effect. The dedication was not, after all, an official military text or an imperial edict, where precise references to legally distinct groups might be expected.

Ain Sidi el-Hadj – Building dedication



(after Salama 1954)



Nador (after Leveau 1984)

The first and last letters of every line together form the words *praedium Sammacis*.¹⁹

In the inscription Sammac makes great play of his fidelity to the interests of Rome and the services he has provided, not only by erecting the *praesidium* but also by getting the neighbouring tribes to put aside war through their desire to achieve an alliance with him.

Ammianus also describes Sammac's residence: '*fundi Petrensis.. quem... in modum urbis exstruxit*'. No informative report of the remains at M'lakou exists, but Souma was described in the last century as a rectangular structure, 50 x 40 m, flanked by towers (probably at the angles). The gateway, four metres wide, lay in the middle of the east face.²⁰

VIII.2.2 Mauretanian fundi

These two sites were far from unique in Mauretania. Ammianus himself mentions two further sites, the *fundi Gaionatis* and *Mazucanis*, but archaeology greatly expands the corpus. Best known is a remarkable, homogenous group of strongholds in the western Ouarsenis. The type-site is Ksar el Kaoua, an impressive courtyard building, which doubtless once rose at least two stories high. Its ground plan anticipates that of Warkworth Castle keep, in Northumberland, with projecting rectangular towers in the middle of each outer face. The rooms arranged around the courtyard feature considerable carved (and doubtless originally painted) decoration, in the vernacular style typical of Late Roman buildings in the Ouarsenis and indeed the entire African frontier zone. Above the arch of gateway, itself protected by twin towers, an inscription exclaims *Spes in Dei, Ferini, amen!*. Doubtless Ferinus was the *dominus* of this particular estate. Although Kaoua is the finest example, several other very similar sites are found in the area around Ammi Moussa, notably Sedadja, Ksar Kbaba, Ksar Djerane and Kherba bou Zoula. The *castra* built by M Aurelius Vasefin in 339, on his *praedia* at Ammi Moussa, doubtless also belonged to this group of structures; so too the [*praedia* or [*castra* A]ureli(i) [Inno]centis, dedicated in 341 at Ain Sidi el Hadj, north of Columnata. Unfortunately the documented remains associated with both dedicatory inscriptions are very poorly known.²¹

19. The inscription: CRAI 1901, 170 = AE 1901, 150 = ILS 9351. It is discussed by Gsell 1901B, 170-172 and 1903A, 22, 30 & 35; cf. also Salama 1954, 218 & 222; Courtois 1955, 115; Matthews 1976, 175-176 and 1989, 372-373; Mattingly 1984, 192 and 1987, 87; Camps 1983 (1985) 309 and 1984, 186 fig.1; Kotula 1970, 143.

20. *Fundus Petrensis*: AM XXIX v 13. For the archaeological remains of Petra (Mlakou) see AAA 6, 148, Mercier 1885, 475 and above VII.5.3.

Souma: de Vigneral 1868, 98-99, Gsell 1903A, 27-28, AAA 5, 48, and above VII.5.2.

21. The *fundus Gaionatis*: AM XXIX v 25; *fundus Mazucanis*: AM XXIX v 31.

Ksar el Kaoua: AAA 22, 63 & add, the reading of the Moorish noble's name on the dedicatory inscription (CIL VIII 21533) is not absolutely certain but Ferinus seems the best rendering. For the architectural decoration typical of the Romano-Moorish culture of the Ouarsenis cf. Cadenat 1957 & 1979, and compare with corresponding material from Tripolitania: Ward Perkins & Goodchild 1953 and De Angelis d'Ossat & Farrioli 1975.

TURRETED VILLAE IN MOSAICS



Lord Julius Mosaic, Carthage

(after Dunbabin 1978)



Bordj Djedid, Carthage

This particular form of *ksar* or *gasr* may have been peculiar to the western Ouarsenis but fortified *fundi*, of one sort or another, were probably present throughout rural Caesariensis. Leveau's recent work in the Dahra has drawn attention to a number of examples in that mountain range, notably El-Limt, Ararfi and El-Ksar. The group in the Ouarsenis was distinguished much earlier because the relevant sites were recorded more meticulously than was usual in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (the descriptions published by Marchand, Derrien and Lacave-Laplagne, include many plans and photographs). In the past many fortified villas were doubtless interpreted as '*postes militaires*'. Moreover African mosaics of Late Roman date display numerous turreted and apparently defensible estate centres, in the long peaceful heart of the diocese. The well-known villa at Nador, between *Tipasa* and *Caesarea*, provides a Mauretanian example of this type of structure. There, a highly elaborate, turreted facade disguises a functional farm with only limited domestic accommodation, clearly the domain of an absentee landlord belonging to the urban aristocracy of *Tipasa* or *Caesarea*. Nador's defensive qualities were more symbolic than real.²²

Defensible *fundi* doubtless formed the superior unit in the rural settlement hierarchy throughout much of Late Roman Mauretania. Those discussed above lay in rugged mountainous regions, the preserve of tribal communities. In some cases dependent villages grew up around the administrative buildings, as presumably occurred in the case of Petra to judge from Ammianus' account. Their emergence, like that of the Tripolitanian *gsur*, was doubtless the result of a complex range of factors. They may reflect a degree of lawlessness in the Mauretanian countryside and the need for protection from it. These buildings would provide secure storage for the produce of the surrounding countryside and might serve as a fortified refuge for the inhabitants of the district. The *fundus Gaionatis*, near *Castellum Tingitanum*, is described by Ammianus as '*muro circumdatum valido, receptaculum Maurorum tutissimum*'. Theodosius had to use a battering ram to breach and demolish that circuit wall. In part the adoption of this turreted form may also be a cultural trait. As was noted above, turreted, defensible buildings were apparently present in the Proconsularis and Byzacena where no barbarian raid could have been anticipated.²³

Kherba bou Zoula: AAA 22,67; Ksar Kbaba: AAA 22,69 & add; Sedadja: AAA 22,72 & add; Ksar Djerane: AAA 22,83 & add.

The castra of Aurelius Vasefin: CIL VIII 21531 = 9725 = ILS 6021; cf. AAA 22,61 & add. The [P]raedia A]ureli(i) [Inno]centis: AE 1955, 140 = Salama 1954, 219-222; cf. Salama 1966, 1311 n.1, and 1973, 349 nr.78 & map.

Gsell drew his information for the Atlas from Marchand 1895, Derrien 1895 and Lacave-Laplagne 1911. Lawless 1970 II, 115-120, figs.25-29 (esp fig.25) for discussion of the entire group.

22. For similar sites in the Dahra see Leveau 1977, 274-279 & 301-303.

Nador: Anselmino et al., 1989 (excavation report); cf. AAA 4,31 & add, Gsell 1901A I, 100-102, CIL VIII 20934 (the praedium of M. Cincius Hilarianus).

23. See above n.16.

There may also have been an element of emulating official structures, comparable to acquiring official rank such as *vir perfectissimus*, but the fact that these sites could be described as *praesidia*, *castra* or a *receptaculum tutissimum* does not necessarily signify that the state had a hand in their construction, as part of a system of defence in depth, nor even considered them useful elements for local policing. I would argue that most no more performed a military function than did the bulk of Tripolitanian *gsur*. They served as the residences of dominant lineages within a tribal framework, any communal role being restricted to the social units for which they formed a focus.

VIII.2.3 *Praesidium firmat prudentia pacis*

However the acrostic dedication from *Petra*, coupled with the 'coincidence' that two widely separated, strategically positioned 'castles' can be identified in the hands of a single lineage, does appear to imply an involvement in preserving internal security and communications. If it is not the buildings themselves that are exceptional, it may be the role of the proprietors.

As in Tripolitania, we have to go back to the warfare of the later third century and the campaigns of Maximian to understand these arrangements. Salama (1954, 225-226) proposed an ingenious theory that the emperor Maximian created a network of political alliances with local dynasties in the Ouarsenis, establishing their fortunes or consolidating their existing authority, in order to neutralise any danger from that quarter during his Mauretanian campaign.

Although attractive, Salama's hypothesis suffers from a decisive flaw as far as its applicability to the Moorish nobility of the Ouarsenis is concerned. The very fact that these families are mere *Aurelii*, which Salama saw as one of the distinguishing characteristics of noble families benefitting from Tetrarchic favour, actually undermines his theory. It is no surprise that *Aurelii* are so prominent in the epigraphy of western Caesariensis. Most of that area, including the Ouarsenis massif where Salama focussed his attention, was not formally incorporated into the province until the Severan expansion in 198-201, only a few years prior to the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. Thereafter, the bulk of the region's inhabitants would have become *Aurelii*, at a stroke. If the proprietors of the *castra* and *praedia* in the western Ouarsenis had actually received special imperial favour, one would have expected to find them adopting the tetrarchic *nomen* 'Valerius'. Nevertheless Salama's idea may have a wider relevance, outlining the sort of process which may have occurred throughout the African frontier provinces during the Late Empire. Most notably it helps to explain the rise of the dynasty of Nubel.²⁴

24. See Salama 1954, 225-226 nn.111-112 for lists of fourth century and later *Aurelii* in western Caesariensis.

It is not enough merely to envisage the imperial authorities establishing Nubel or his father, Saturninus, alongside major highways, to help safeguard internal communications against further tribal banditry. The other side of the equation, the motives of the Moorish nobility itself, must be considered, as the initiative for such arrangements may well have come from chieftains like Nubel, rather than from the imperial administration. In the aftermath of punitive campaigns and policing operations, land was perhaps confiscated from rebellious tribes, or from communities thought to have harboured brigands. Chieftains who had taken part in the army's operations at the head of bands of tribal levies, doubtless seized the opportunity to petition for the grant of such tracts to themselves. In doing so they were simply following the habitual practice of the period, when all new accessions to the *res privata* were vulnerable to acquisition by great and powerful suitors. Indeed, it is likely that the prospect of such gains was one of the motivations for taking part in military campaigns. This would explain the presence of both identified estates close to communications routes. Brigandage would tend to be prevalent in those very areas, fuelled by a steady supply of targets worth robbing, namely wealthy travellers and officials.²⁵

Where a lineage already occupied domains straddling strategic roads, an alternative strategy of advancement could be followed. Such groups were in a ready made position to win official favour by offering protection to travellers and suppressing brigandage. Nubel's line did not start off from such a fortunate situation. Nubel was said to belong to the *Jubaleni*, located near *Auzia*, whereas the centre of his landed property seems to lie in or around the Mitidja plain near *Rusguniae* and *Icosium*, with other estates scattered around, like Sammac's *Petra* in the Soummam valley. Clearly these domains were the result of judicious acquisitions.²⁶

The military authorities were doubtless not unhappy to see estates at such vulnerable points pass into reliable hands, and may have done something to foster the process, or at any rate acquiesced in it. The rise of the house of Nubel may

The pattern of innumerable *Aurelii* is common to other areas where citizenship was restricted prior to 213, such as Egypt. The high proportion of *Aurelii* (drawn from the peasant populations of Illyricum and Thrace) in the third century army is another reflection of this pattern.

25. It is possible that Gildo's great wealth of property may have originated after the defeat of Firmus, if Gildo, as kinsman of Firmus who had nevertheless remained loyal to the imperial cause, petitioned Valentinian for Firmus' private fortune. For this practice see Jones *LRE*, 422-424.

26. Nubel and the *Jubaleni*: *AM* XXIX v 44.

The evidence that the focus of Nubel's landed wealth lay in or near the Mitidja is as follows:-- The seizure of *Icosium* seems to have been achieved by Firmus himself, rather than by one of his allied chieftains. The city's return was demanded by Theodosius as a condition of negotiation (*AM* XXIX v 16), and Firmus' prompt compliance suggests the city was entirely at his disposal. This implies his own estates and personal followers lay nearby. Souma, in the Beni Aischa pass, may have been one of those estates, and Blad Guitoun, another.

The building of a *basilica sancta ligno crucis* at *Rusguniae*, by Flavius Nuvel, ex-praepositus equitum armigerorum iuniorum, would thus fit well into this framework, as another reflection of the family's dominance of this region: *CIL* VIII 9255 = *ILCV* 1822 and see below VIII.3.2.

have been the result of a complex interaction between the regional administration's need to ensure internal security and the desire of Romano-Moorish nobles for land and titles to enhance their prestige with regard to local rivals.

Matthews and Mattingly have argued that the Roman authorities devolved the main responsibility for policing the Mauretanian countryside onto chieftains like Nubel and Sammac, and withdrew most of the regular garrisons. Mattingly (1984, 192), drawing attention to the passage '*finitimae gentes deponere bella in tua concurrent cupientes foedera Sammac*' in the *Petra* dedication, suggests that such chieftains even had the right to arrange treaties with neighbouring tribes on Rome's behalf.

A little caution may be warranted here. I have argued above (Chapters II and V) that troops were stationed in the Mauretaniae, both *limitanei* and *comitatenses*, in greater numbers than Mattingly supposes. Similarly, one may question how technically the term *foedus* is being used in the *Petra* dedication. Was Sammac not simply proclaiming his loyalty to the imperial administration and his success in building up a personal network of tribal clients? The two were surely intimately linked. It was closeness to the imperial administration, the ability to act as an intermediary between officers like Romanus and Moorish tribes, that enhanced a magnate's value as a patron, particularly to those groups who might have cause to fear the commander's wrath.

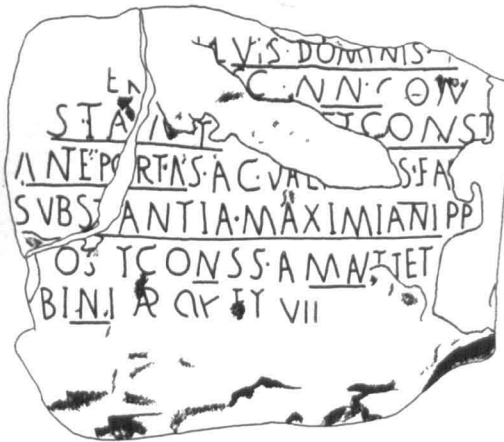
The official favour bestowed on Sammac and his like was presumably based on their readiness to participate in punitive operations and support the policing activities of the local garrison of the *limes Tubusubditanus*. *Petra* may even have provided a billet or incorporated a fortlet for a small detachment of *limitanei*, thereby justifying the label *praesidium*. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that Sammac himself held the post of *praepositus limitis Tubusubditanus*. He was after all one of the foremost members of the local elite and held in the highest esteem by Romanus, the *comes*. His father, Nubel, had even commanded a regiment of the regional field army, the *equites armigeri iuniores*. Mattingly (1987, 87) himself suggests 'that some of the *praepositi* were not army officers at all, but local chiefs'. The point is surely that one could be both a chief and an army officer.

Thus the *Petra* dedication reflects at an individual level the duties signified by the phrase *curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati* in *CTH* VII xv 1, albeit in bombastic language appropriate to a high profile case like Sammac. The rhetoric symbolises the fact that whatever para-military duties tribesmen were bound to perform, Nubel's dynasty had risen on the basis of performing those duties with greater enthusiasm than the rest.

VIII.2.4 Other Mauretanian Examples

Maximianus and Saturninus

Substantia Maximiani pp



(after Cadenat 1953)

Saturninus at Dahmouni



(after Cadenat 1988)

Nubel's lineage undoubtedly provided the most prominent chieftains of Later Roman Mauretania, but they were not an isolated phenomenon. A number of possible examples have been identified in the epigraphic sources. Salama (1954) and Matthews (1976, 172 & 185) have drawn attention to two individuals engaged in building work near *Columnata* (mod. Sidi Hosni, ex Waldeck-Rousseau) south of the Ouarsenis range. The first, one Maximianus *p(rae)p(ositus)*, furnished the wherewithal (*substantia*) for the construction of the gates of an unspecified edifice at Kherba of the Aouisset in 346. The second was the decurion, Satur[ninus?], who superintended the construction of a *fundus* by the inhabitants (*incolae*) at nearby Dahmouni (ex Trumelet), perhaps half a century or more later. Matthews envisages both men as local dynasts who had usurped Roman military titles and largely taken over responsibility for local defence in the frontier zone, a possibility also raised by Salama (1954, 223-224). However, the latter scholar also put forward an alternative interpretation that both these figures were *praepositi limitum* undertaking projects associated with their office.²⁷

Full discussion of these dedications is provided in Appendices K.2 and L. It is argued that both these men were indeed regular frontier *praepositi*, but there the similarity between the two ends.

Whether or not Saturninus was a local man, the lack of any proprietorial indication in the Dahmouni *fundus* dedication suggests he was acting in an official capacity. He may have been supervising the establishment of a defensible communal storehouse, where the *incolae* could safely gather their surplus. Much of that surplus was doubtless destined for the garrison of the *limes Columnatensis*, explaining the involvement of the *praepositus limitis*.

Maximianus probably did not initiate the fortification work at Kherba des Aouisset, his title, *p(rae)p(ositus)* [*l(imitis)?*], being acknowledged simply as a mark of his status as an imperial officeholder. Rather, it was his position as wealthy local landowner which compelled Maximianus' participation in the project. In the context of Late Imperial Africa it is not at all contradictory that a notable should exercise frontier command, even in his home area.

Although Maximianus was acting in a private capacity, the work he funded was probably part of an officially sponsored project, undertaken by a recognised community. The Kherba des Aouisset text is a formal imperial dedication, complete with

27. The Kherba des Aouisset inscription is published in Cadenat 1953, 169-170 (with a good illustration) = Salama 1954, 205-207 (with a photograph on page 206) = AE 1955, 139. Comprehensive discussion is provided by Salama 1954, 205-229, and 1966, 1304-1305 and Matthews 1976, 172 & 185 nn.80-81. See Appendix K.2 for text and analysis.

The Dahmouni dedication: BCTH 1900, p.CXXXIII; 1903, p.CLXVI; and especially 1910, p.CLXXIX; *De donis dei, huic fundus ab [in]/colis constructum, Satur[ninus?] / dec(urio) perfecit cum Maxim(us), M[axi]/mi(a?)ni fili, feliciter*. See Appendix L.

the usual opening formulae and a consular date, in stark contrast to inscriptions from the private estates of the western Ouarsenis. I would tentatively suggest that the dedication's terse phraseology is inappropriate as a record of personal munificence undertaken on his own initiative by one individual. Rather, it represents one notable's contribution ('*portas ac val[v(as) sua]s fa[ct(as)]*') to a much larger scheme, such as the restoration of a fort or the construction of circuit walls for a settlement. The inscription may have belonged to a series of near identical texts erected at appropriate points in the fortification crediting all those responsible. The formula *substantia Maximiani* may be paralleled in another fortification project of this period, repair work on the fort at Ras el-Ain in Tripolitania, where it is possible to restore *sub[stantia C]resconii* on the imperial dedication (see Appendix K.3). Salama has associated the Aouisset dedication with contemporary building activity on the circuit walls at Altava and Mouzaia. He sees these as part of a widespread programme promoted by the imperial government with tax concessions deliberately aimed at the African cities, as attested in mid fourth century legislation. Thus the work at Dahmouni and Kherba des Aouisset both reflect a mixture of communal initiative and official instruction, all a far remove from any notion of quasi-autonomous chieftains seizing responsibility for the defence of their part of the frontier zone.

Masaisilen

Another case is that of M. Aurelius Masaisilen, the builder of the *centenarium* at Ourthi n' Taroummant in the Grande Kabylie in 328, noted in VII.5.2. Again, it is conceivable that Masaisilen's *centenarium* was his own private domain, like the *castra* of Vasefin. Certainly the fortification was built by Masaisilen at his own expense, as demonstrated by the phrase *suis sum(p)tibus*, but that very phrase is double-edged for it implicitly suggests that there were other beneficiaries, otherwise it would be utterly superfluous. The label *centenarium* also tentatively points towards the site having official status, whilst its location beside the main east-west route through the Grande Kabylie is exactly the sort of position one would expect to find a military police station. It may also be significant that Masaisilen was a former tribal prefect.²⁸

It therefore seems reasonable to consider this inscription as another reflection of *cura et tuitio limitis* etc. Certainly I would argue that the *limes Bidensis* was similar to the commands of eastern Tripolitania, being dependent on the mobilisation of tribal posses for much of its punitive strength. It was a region where the survival of tribal society was very pronounced, as noted in section IV.2.1. Furthermore, the military headquarters at Bida was probably established by Maximian, following tribal unrest involving the

28. *CIL* VIII 9010, found at Ourthi n' Taroummant; cf. AAA 6,97-99. See Appendix K.1, with full bibliography.

Quinquegentanei during the mid-late third centuries, again like the eastern Tripolitanian *limites*.

VIII.2.5 Conclusion

The importance of leading chieftains to the security of Tripolitania and Mauretania, is manifest. This importance derived from their control and influence over frontier tribalism. Fulfilment of *curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati*, and comparable obligations, depended crucially on the willing participation of pro-government chieftains to galvanise their fellow tribesmen into action. On the shoulders of such loyal '*caids*' fell the task of raising and leading posses in response to a raid or an outbreak of banditry; and of enthusing warriors with the prospect of booty and plunder when their participation in a Roman punitive campaign was sought. Similarly they organised the building of communal defences and took responsibility for the erection of imperial fortifications where necessary.

This is scarcely surprising. Roman administration everywhere depended on the cooperation of intermediaries within the local elite to function. Indeed, the recruitment of local elites was the very essence of the Roman system, one of the most crucial factors in the strength and resilience of the Empire. Moreover, chieftains serving as indispensable intermediaries between the imperial state and Berber tribesmen are not entirely peculiar to the Later Empire. The ability to perform this role presumably explains the rise to prominence of Lusius Quietus, under Trajan.

I would argue for a cautious assessment of the degree of real defensive autonomy possessed by provincial tribes in the fourth century. Even in areas where few Roman troops were stationed, such as eastern Tripolitania, tribal notables and levies operated within a framework of Roman military commands and with some army support. The three inscriptions discussed immediately above are good case in point. It is tempting to link these texts and to assume that the *centenarium*, the *fundus* and Maximianus' gated building all represent castles or local strongpoints built by Moorish tribal dynasts, either for their own use or on their own initiative for the defence of their community. However, on close analysis each can be interpreted individually, as relating to a different aspect of Mauretanian frontier defence, all with some form of official input or association.

Far from implying any erosion of the government's grip on the frontier zone, it can be argued that the inscriptions discussed above reveal a high level of official control in those regions. Even the most powerful inhabitants of the African *limites* can be witnessed discharging their public responsibilities on the instructions of the provincial administration, in the prescribed manner. One would have expected these individuals to have been the first to evade their share of such duties if Late Imperial authority was as weak as has sometimes been alleged.

The Epitaph of Masties



FIG. 2. — Inscription d'Arris.

(after Février 1988)

In fact, these frontier notables had good reason to participate in the region's military organisation. It is clear that in return they could expect considerable reward in terms of land grants and official titles. Those who led tribal contingents would doubtless be first in line when petitioning for the award of confiscated lands, to say nothing of the wealth that might be gained from plunder, the prestige conferred by victory, and the political capital to be made by distributing booty to fellow tribesmen. I have argued that Nubel's dynasty built up its extensive power base by this very means. On a more prosaic scale the lead Masaisilen took in providing the *centenarium* at Ourthi n' Taroummant, perhaps shouldering a burden that would ordinarily have been born by a larger group of tribesmen, doubtless strengthened his position within tribal politics, as well as winning the approval of the military authorities. In this way tenure of the tribal prefecture could lay the foundation of dynastic power.

VIII.3 ROMANO-MOORISH NOBLES IN LATE IMPERIAL SOCIETY

The involvement of the frontier elite in military affairs was not restricted to the leadership of counter-raids or local policing. It reflects their increasing integration into wider Late Romano-African society. It is this integration which will be explored next.

VIII.3.1 Officers and honorati

The possibility that many of the local *praepositi* in Tripolitania were drawn from a tribal background has been discussed above. In Mauretania Caesariensis figures like Sammac may conceivably have held equivalent posts. The *p(rae)p(ositus)* Maximianus, at Kherba des Aouisset, and the decurion Saturninus, at Dahmouni, can not be proven to have been of tribal origin, but Maximianus was clearly a local man, whilst Saturninus was a very common name amongst Africans.

Another Roman officer of Moorish descent has been revealed by Février's shrewd reinterpretation of the celebrated figure Masties, known from an epitaph discovered near Arris, deep in the Aurès. In doing so Février cut through a massive verbal edifice, disposing of the *imp(erator)* and *dux*, postulated by Carcopino and Courtois, and their identification of Vartaia, who set up Masties' epitaph, with Ortaias, a sixth century Moorish chieftain mentioned by Procopius.²⁹

29. Février 1988, 141-147.

The inscription: AE 1945, 97; cf. Carcopino 1944; Courtois 1955, 337-339; Carcopino 1956; Pringle 1981, 14 & 346; Salama 1983, 198-199; Camps 1983, 314-315, and 1984, 188 & 198-199; and now Morizot 1989, whose revised reading (1989, 273-274) shortens to 10 years the period Masties *imp(e)r(avit)* or was *imp(e)r(ator)*. Février supplies far more prosaic expansions *dux(i)* and *imp(e)r(avi)*, respectively denoting 'lived' and 'commanded', cf. Février 1968B, 203 and 1988, 143.

The inscription seems to have been studied essentially from photographs. It would, doubtless, benefit from closer inspection.

In particular he focuses on the evocative passage '[q]ui numquam periuravi neque fide fregi neque de Romanos neque de Mauros'. The primacy accorded to 'Romanos' suggests that Masties was in imperial service, the phrase generally pointing towards the role of intermediary between the administration, the local farming population and the Moorish tribes of the frontier region. Masties also appears to have been involved in warfare (*et in bella parui et in pace*). Together these attributes would be more appropriate to a Roman official serving on the frontier, a '*decurio vel tribunus, qui limiti praeest*' perhaps, and certainly '*un homme des confins*' rather than an *imperator gentis Maurorum et Romanorum*.³⁰

A similar case may be represented by Caletamera, the figure whose repeated restoration of the *burgus speculatorius* at Kherbet el-Bordj south of El Kantara, again in Numidia, is recorded in the margins of the original Caracallan dedication. His name indicates Moorish origin. It is quite possible Caletamera was undertaking this work as an imperial officer or nco., but equally he may simply have been acting in the capacity of a local chieftain, like Masaisilen at Ourthi n' Taroummant.³¹

The most famous tribal office holders were, of course, those drawn from Nubel's lineage. Not only did Nubel himself command *equites armigeri seniores*, but one of his sons, Gildo, was to go on to hold very senior office within the military hierarchy - *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Africam*. It is conceivable that Gildo had already set out on a career of military service before his brother's revolt broke out. During the war, Gildo was sent on special missions of a type similar to those undertaken by *protectores* and staff officers - *tribuni vacantes*.³²

Frontier command was not restricted^{to} men of tribal background. The municipal aristocracy^Λ also followed this career route. The best illustration of this is provided by Auzia, where there was something of a tradition of local men commanding the garrison. Iulius Capito, in 301, held the post of *praepositus limitis* in his home town. Gargilius Martialis commanded the *cohors Singularium* and the *vexillatio equitum Maurorum* during the war against Faraxen (probably c.254). Similarly, P. Aelius Peregrinus, whilst serving as a decurion

30. See Février 1988, 144 & 146-147.

The above description might also fit the post of *praefectus gentis*. As such Masties may have been appointed to oversee one of the '*paucissimis barbaras gentes*', recently pacified and installed along the Roman frontiers, of which St Augustine speaks. Involvement in warfare might signify the command of tribal auxiliaries, a duty perhaps included amongst the portfolio of the tribal prefects.

31. Caletamera and his work are discussed in Appendix K.4. The dedicatory inscription is *CIL VIII 2494 = ILS 2636*. For the site see Appendix O.

32. Gildo: *AM XXIX*, v, 6, 21, 24. He executed the missions in conjunction with another individual, Maximus, who has been identified with Magnus Maximus, the general and imperial pretender in Britain in 383, and the Maximus who was a *dux* on the lower Danube in 376, as the Gothic crisis erupted (cf. *PLRE I*, Maximus 39 and Matthews 1989, 371). They were perhaps both trusted officers, possibly attached to Theodosius' staff even before his arrival in Africa. The possibility that Gildo had already have got part way up the ladder, having served in the prestigious praesental field army, would help to explain his swift promotion to become *comes Africae* by the 380's.

of the *ala II Thracum*, was appointed *praepositus vexillationum equitum Maurorum*, perhaps during an outbreak of unrest in 220's or 230's. If he wasn't a native of *Auzia* he certainly became a prominent decurion of that *colonia*, and of *Rusguniae* and *Equizeto*.³³

It is significant that there is no means of distinguishing whether a figure like Maximianus, at Kherba des Aouisset, derived from a tribal background or a civic one. It could be argued that the African frontier zone was increasingly taking on a homogenous character, irrespective of the institutional technicalities of its various component peoples.

Chieftains certainly did obtain honorary rank, as attested by the perfectissimate equestrian status of Aurelius Vasefin. Saturninus, the father of Flavius Nuvel (= Nubel), was likewise a *vir perfectissimus* and also *ex comes*. However, there is no need automatically to assume that military titles were purely honorary or self-arrogated. Tribal notables were as free to make a career in the imperial administration and army as their counterparts in the urban communities. Indeed, perhaps even more so, for decurions were in theory at least tied to their municipal duties. As for the usurpation of Roman titles by Moorish dynasts it would surely have been counterproductive. Such titles served to symbolise a noble's good connections in the imperial officialdom, and thus his ability to win favours for his clients or kinsfolk. Fraudulence in this respect would only serve to undermine a magnate's standing.³⁴

VIII.3.2 Christianity

In other spheres too the frontier elite of North Africa belonged to the mainstream of Later Roman culture, notably in their adoption of Christianity. Once again Nubel and his lineage are as conspicuous as standard bearers. At *Rusguniae* a church was built to house a fragment of the True Cross by Flavius Nuvel, *ex praepositus equitum armigerorum iuniorum*, and his wife Nonnica. Despite the reservations of PLRE I (633-636), which have been decisively dealt with by Matthews (1974, 104-105), this Moorish officer is probably identical to the 'Nubel' whom Ammianus names as the father of Firmus, Gildo, Sammac and the rest. The prestigious nature of the project, the ability to acquire such a valuable item and to build an entire church from his own resources, accords with the powerful image of Nubel presented by Ammianus. Accordingly, the church was probably erected at some time in the middle decades of the fourth century. A further reflection of the lineage's faith may be represented by the

33. Iulius Capito: CIL VIII 9025; Gargilius Martialis: CIL VIII 9047 = ILS 2767; P. Aelius Primianus CIL VIII 9045 = ILS 2766.

34. For decurions tied to their *ordines* cf. Jones 1974, 396-398 & 413-416. If, for example, Maximianus' position *p(rae)p(ositus)* was simply a honorary one with no duties attached, as has been suggested, the normal form would be *ex praepositus*.

dedication from the castle of Souma, proclaiming *Spes in [nomine? D]ei*.³⁵

As Février (1986A, 801-804) has noted, such study as has been carried out suggests that Christianity was widely disseminated in the African frontier zone by the fourth-fifth centuries. Gsell (1928) discussed the evidence relating to western Caesariensis (Oranie), whilst Cadenat (1957) has dealt in greater detail with the region around Tiaret, embracing the south-western Ouarsenis massif and the headwaters of the Mina. In Tripolitania, Christianity had spread throughout the Jebel range and south into the pre-desert wadis, as noted in section VII.6.3. The degree to which ecclesiastical organisation covered the African provinces during Late Antiquity is underlined by the episcopal *notitia* of 484. No fewer than 467 bishoprics are listed, 126 of them in Mauretania Caesariensis alone. Many of these episcopal centres are unlocated and must have been quite small communities. Some growth in the number of bishoprics may have occurred in the period since the end of imperial rule but even allowing for that the total of bishoprics at the beginning of the fifth century must have been substantial.³⁶

It is clear that tribesmen were not excluded from these currents, as demonstrated by some of the individuals already mentioned. The builder of Ksar el Kaoua apparently placed his trust in God. Although undated, it may perhaps be located in the first half of the fourth century by analogy with the other inscriptions from the Ouarsenis *ksour*, such as the building dedication of M. Aurelius Vasefin's *castra* at Ammi Moussa (339) and Aurelius Innocens' establishment at Ain Sidi el-Hadj (341). Similarly, the *fundus* at Dahmouni was constructed by the *incolae, de donis Dei*. The possible Latin cross beginning Caletamera's commemoration of his repair work at Kherbet el-Bordj, and Masties' proclamation that '*sic mecu(m) Deus egit bene*' suggest a similar spread of faith amongst the tribal nobility of southern Numidia. The tribal status of some of these individuals is not absolutely assured, but the general picture is clear enough.

The extent to which Christian-Pagan divide had become synonymous with the imperial frontier is emphasised by the letters of St Augustine. Transhumant barbarian tribesmen entering the Tripolitanian frontier zone - Arzugitana - swore oaths in the name of their own gods to keep the peace. In contrast, newly pacified tribes were rapidly evangelised. Not all Roman communities or individuals abandoned paganism of course, and the existence of heresy and schism within the Empire complicates the picture. Nevertheless, this religious

35. Flavius Nuvel: CIL VIII 9255 = ILCV 1822, cf. Matthews 1974, 104-105 and 1976, 174-175 and Gsell 1903A, 23-25. The identity of Flavius Nuvel with Ammianus' Nubel remains controversial. Duval (1983, 357-358) has argued the inscription must be early 5th century because of the titles of Saturninus - Nuvel's father - *vir perfectissimus* and *ex comitibus*. In fact the perfectissimate had lost most of its prestige by the end of the century - see Jones LRE, 526 - and an earlier date is therefore more likely.

The Souma dedication: CIL VIII 9011; cf. Gsell 1903A, 29 and Matthews 1976, 176-177 & 186.

36. *Not. prov.* (484). Février 1986A also discusses the evidence provided by the episcopal lists from the 411 ecclesiastical conference. See also Jones LRE, 715.

divide must have great significance for any understanding of African frontier zone dynamics in the fourth and early fifth centuries.³⁷

VIII.3.3 *Praefecti Gentium*

This picture of Berber chieftainly involvement in the mainstream social and political currents of the Late Empire is underlined by the radical change which the long-lived institution of *praefectus gentis* underwent during this period.

Ammianus mentions *praefecti gentium* on two occasions during the war against Firmus. One of the Mazices' notables whom Gildo and Maximus captured and brought before the *magister militum*, was Fericius, prefect of the tribe. He clearly belonged to the pro-Firmus faction amongst the Mazices' nobility and was charged with having 'aided the party of the disturber of the public peace'. On the second occasion we are told that Theodosius appointed prefects of tried fidelity over the tribes through whose territory he was marching in pursuit of Firmus, after the break up of the great confederal army which Firmus had gathered together with the aid of his sister. It is likely that this work included the consolidation of Roman control over the various tribes which had contributed to that force - the *Baiurae*, *Cantauriani*, *Avastomates*, *Cafaves*, *Bavares* etc.,. This may well have been intended as a pointed demonstration to the reader that greater care was exercised by Theodosius, in making such important appointments, than had been the case under the previous regime of Romanus.³⁸

It is not possible to draw much information from Ammianus' account regarding the post of tribal prefect and its role in tribal affairs, but there are a number of inscriptions and a small but useful body of literary and legal sources referring to it. These have been the subject of two excellent studies by Leveau and Lepelley, which have done much to illuminate the institution. The principal point of note in this context is the radical transformation which the prefecture underwent. During the Principate the post was filled by army officers, urban dignitaries or equestrian administrators, often with responsibility for the administration of more than one tribe. By the Late Empire the post had become monopolised by the tribal nobility itself.³⁹

These indigenous prefects should probably be seen as comparable to *curatores*, the senior civic magistrates, who were in theory appointed by the imperial government. In practice we know they were actually nominated by the city councils and imperial confirmation was a mere formality. I suspect something similar was the case with the *praefecti*, apart from exceptional circumstances such as the aftermath of

37. Pacified and evangelised tribes: Aug. Ep. 199.46 and above IV.2.4.

For pagan survivals and their possible role in the frontier zone see above VII.6.3.

38. Fericius: AM XXIX v 21. 'Prefects of tried fidelity': AM XXIX v 35.

39. Leveau 1973, 175-186, Lepelley 1974; and cf. Martin 1977-1979, 78-83 for 2 (perhaps 3) new examples (AE 1985, 901 & 902).

Firmus' revolt or the incorporation of a tribe into the Empire. In other words it was the activity of Theodosius which was abnormal, not that of his predecessors, nor need the *laissez-faire* attitude of the latter be ascribed to laxity or incompetence.

This system probably grew up in the early-mid third century when the earliest of a homogenous group of such prefects is recorded in the Grande Kabylie (one of five such *ex praefecti gentium* recorded in that region). *Praefecti gentium* do not seem to have acquired the imperial *gentilicium*, Flavius, on entering office, to judge from the epigraphic record. Instead they remain *Aurelii*, indicating merely enfranchisement as a result of the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. This implies the post carried very modest rank in the official hierarchy of honours and titles. Nevertheless, tenure of the tribal prefecture did provide the opportunity to display fidelity to the government and generally bring oneself to the notice of the imperial authorities, making useful contacts and perhaps even gaining more exalted rank or position. Consequently it may well have been the focus of considerable competition.⁴⁰

No *praefecti* are explicitly attested from Tripolitania. Nevertheless, the institution may have been present there also and may have undergone a similar transformation, if the 'lords of administration and justice' commemorated at Bir ed-Dreder do in fact represent Latino-Punic translations of 'tribal prefect', as tentatively suggested in section IV.2.2.

This change in the composition of tribal prefects symbolises a development of fundamental importance. Far from signifying that tribes were slipping out of Roman control or seceding, it demonstrates the extent to which tribal communities had been assimilated into the provincial structure by the fourth century. Clearly the imperial administration now had sufficient confidence in the chieftainly elite to hand tribal local government over to them, maintaining only the facade of the earlier systems.

VIII.4 CONCLUSION: REBELS AND INTERMEDIARIES

To conclude this chapter it is appropriate to return to the example of Nubel and his lineage. Not only does this dynasty provide the most striking example of the 'intermediary' role played by members of the Late Romano-Moorish aristocracy, but also, in the shape of the revolt of Firmus, it supplies the strongest Late Imperial evidence for the contrary notion of permanent tribal resistance to Imperial rule. Can these contradictions be resolved.

VIII.4.1 Nubel: A Paradigm of Chieftainly Participation

40. Prefects in the Grande Kabylie: M Aurelius Masaisilen, *ex prefectus V* (= *Quinquegentianorum*?) at Ourthi n' Taroummant (328): *CIL* VIII 9010 and above VIII.2.4 and Appendix K.4; *CIL* VIII 9008; *BCH* 1920, p.LXIV (cf. Carcopino 1920); *AE* 1985, 901; & 902.
Aurelii: see previous note and add Aurelius Masuca, at Zucchabar: *CIL* VIII 9613.

Our main source for the revolt of Firmus is Ammianus' account. The course of the conflict has been analysed in depth by Gsell (1903A) and more recently by Matthews (1976 and 1989, 367-376). A number of salient points emerge, with regard to the above question. First, however, the nature of

Nubel's and Firmus' authority, as illuminated by Ammianus, must be outlined.

The suggestion made above that the dynasty's authority originated with land grants in the aftermath of Maximian's Mauretanian campaign, perhaps under Nubel's father, Saturninus, accords with the wide geographical dispersal of Firmus' relatives, apparent in Ammianus' text.⁴¹ Firmus' - and probably Nubel's - power-base lay in the Mitidja Plain and the surrounding hill-country, near *Icosium* (Algiers) and *Rusguniae*.⁴² In contrast the other members of the clan draw their strength from areas far removed from the Mitidja. Mazuca may be a chief of the *Mazices*, settled in the Dahra and Zaccar mountains south and west of *Caesarea*. It was probably Mazuca who led the attack on the provincial capital - 'a city on which (Mazuca) had branded the savage mark of his evil deeds' - and it was there that his head was despatched after his capture and suicide. Mascezel and Dius appear leading the *Masinissenses* and *Tyndenses* in the valley of the Oued Soummam, where Sammac was also esconced. Firmus' sister, Cyria, organised a great tribal confederation, in either the Dahra or the Ouarsenis, to come to her brother's assistance. Gildo cannot be identified with any particular region. He may have been a career army officer and derived status and power from military rank.⁴³

Not only was the dynasty's authority not restricted to Nubel's tribe of origin - the *Iubaleni* - but, still more strikingly, that tribe does not even play a particularly significant role in the revolt, contrary to what might have been expected. The *Iubaleni* are mentioned only once during the entire campaign. Firmus did not seek refuge in their territory at any stage, let alone try to make a last stand with them. In those final stages of the campaign it is the

41. Saturninius was honoured with the titles, *vir perfectissimus* and *ex comes* on CIL VIII 9255 = ILCV 1822.

42. See above VIII.2.3 n.26. Firmus seems to have inherited the Mitidja estates to judge from the Souma dedication and his seizure of *Icosium*.

43. Mazuca: AM XXIX, v, 40-42. His association with the *Mazices* is only tentative but the location of his power-base in their general region seems clear enough. The *Mazices* are the nearest tribe to *Caesarea* apparently involved in the revolt. It seems likely that they were involved in the seizure of the capital and Mazuca certainly played a prominent role in that action. The *fundus Mazucanus* (AM XXIX, v, 31), to which Theodosius retired after extricating his forces from battle with the tribes raised by Cyria, may be one of Mazuca's strongholds. The *fundus* clearly lay somewhere in west-central *Caesariensis*, perhaps in the Chelif valley near *Castellum Tingitanum* or *Tigava*.

Mascezel and Dius: AM XXIX, v, 11-14.

Cyria: AM XXIX, v, 28.

Gildo: see above n.27.

Judicious marriage (or concubinage) alliances may also have played a part in the ascent of Nubel's lineage, as other clans or tribes sought to associate themselves with this rising star. Sammac, for example, is known to have been Nubel's son by a concubine: AM XXIX, v, 2.

Isaflenses and the *Iesalenses* who cause Theodosius most problems.⁴⁴

Thus, the position of Nubel and Firmus was supra-tribal, operating at much higher level than that of the ordinary chieftain. They were able to exercise some authority or influence across central and eastern Caesariensis. In effect, Nubel and his immediate kinsmen acted as intermediaries between the imperial administration and the tribal *optimates*, who themselves dealt with the humbler *gentiles*. The lineage's powerbase comprised large estates, a network of kinship based alliances and close ties with the imperial administration. Firmus had friends at the imperial court. He was also able to suborn some of the local field army regiments. They apparently proclaimed him emperor. He may even have had supporters amongst the municipal communities.⁴⁵

Ammianus sums all this up succinctly. Nubel was '*velut regulus*', not it may be noted simply *regulus* or *rex*. In other words he had no designated authority amongst the Mauretanian tribes, but he had power and influence equivalent to a kinglet. No formal system of indirect rule was adopted, like that established by the French, in southern Morocco, during the early twentieth century. There, the role of pacifying the High Atlas was handed over to despotic tribal princes, '*grand caids*', most notably those of the Glaoua family. However, Nubel was doubtless increasingly valued as a '*fixer*'. Inadvertently, by rewarding conspicuous loyalty, the imperial government had fostered a dangerous concentration of power.⁴⁶

VIII.4.2 The Revolt of Firmus

It has been suggested that Firmus' revolt was a deliberate attempt to seize control of Africa and '*secede*', making use of the power and prestige accumulated by his father (Kotula 1970, 146 and Mattingly 1984, 193). This interpretation - so tempting when viewed in the light of modern colonial history - should be resisted. Ammianus, in fact, provides us with a perfectly plausible personal motive for Firmus' actions. In the jockeying for power amongst Nubel's family, following the magnate's death, Firmus, perhaps the favourite son and the most legitimate successor, had taken a step too far by murdering Sammac, the favoured candidate of the *comes*,

44. Mention of *Iubaleni*: AM XXIX, v, 44. It is possible that the picture is more complex than it appears. The *Isaflenses* and *Iesalenses* might be tribes belonging to a wider confederation known as the *Iubaleni*, but if so Ammianus was unaware of it, for there is nothing in his text to suggest this was the case.

45. Friends at court: AM XXIX, v, 2.

Firmus and the army: AM XXIX, v, 19-20 & 24.

Firmus and the civic notables: AM XXIX, v, 43.

The implausible suggestion of Seock that Firmus' name should be restored on a dedication from Calama (Guelma) (CIL VIII 17488 = 5338 = ILAlg I 253, cf. PLRE I, 340, sv. Firmus 3) has been decisively refuted by Cagnat 1913, 78, Kotula 1970, 140 and Lepelley 1981, 96 n.20. The single emperor, whose name was partially erased from the civic dedication, was Julian.

46. Glaoua brothers and 'Great Caids' policy: Maxwell, 1983.

Certainly, the authority of Nubel and Firmus over the Mauretanian tribes seems far looser than that exercised by the Glaoua brothers with their Krupp 77-millimetre cannon.

Romanus. In fear for his life, and finding his friends at court to be ineffective in pleading his case in the face of the obstruction of Remigius, the *magister officiorum*, Firmus was left with only two options. He could either surrender meekly, or launch a rebellion. He chose the latter path, and was apparently even proclaimed emperor by the local troops he managed to draw over to his side.

It is not clear why Romanus opposed the succession of Firmus and supported Sammac. Perhaps the third (?) generation 'caid' was a little too powerful and independent, in the eyes of the count, particularly when compared with the overtly pro-government chief, Sammac. Romanus' attempt to play one son off against the other, however understandable, misfired disastrously, provoking Firmus to take increasingly desperate measures in an effort to force the *comes* to accept him as Nubel's legitimate successor. In assassinating Sammac, Firmus presumably hoped to present Romanus with a *fait accompli*, perhaps trusting to his friends at court to protect him from retribution. In fact, the action only confirmed Romanus' worst suspicions, that Firmus was an over-mighty subject and spurred the general into further endeavours to bring about the Moor's downfall.

Thus, far from being a premeditated attempt to secede, the revolt is perhaps better portrayed as a power-struggle, amongst senior members of the provincial aristocracy, which got tragically out of hand.

Furthermore, despite the undoubted ferocity of the warfare, there is much in Ammianus' account of the actual campaign which does not accord with the picture of a tribal aristocracy implacably hostile to Roman rule, and desirous of secession. Indeed, even his description of Firmus' actions reveals a strange ambivalence and indecision, in the early stages of Theodosius' offensive.

Firmus appears to lack any clear strategy for defeating the *magister militum*. The general impression is of someone who had been manoeuvred into a confrontation not of his choice, but had not given up all hope of playing his preferred role as a loyal intermediary between government and tribes. Thus Firmus despatched a conciliatory letter and hostages as soon as Theodosius arrived at *Sitifis*.⁴⁷

Following the defeat of Mascizel and Dius, Firmus agreed to relinquish control of *Icosium* and provide the Roman army with supplies. This is quite extraordinary, Firmus was in effect providing the army with supplies to mount a campaign against himself. It is only explicable as an attempt to depict the tribal unrest as being entirely outside his control and to demonstrate he was just as willing as any loyal magnate to furnish the resources to quell it. Even if it was intended to lull Theodosius into a false sense of security, Firmus must have assumed that his display of renewed loyalty had some

47. First delegation: AM XXIX, v, 8-9. The second delegation failed to bring further hostages as agreed and Theodosius, who had reached *Tubusuctu*, refused to receive it, AM XXIX, v, 11.

chance of being believed. Only when Theodosius reaches *Caesarea* does Firmus take a decisively hostile - but still covert - step against Theodosius, by plotting to subvert the general's troops, doubtless those belonging to the African regiments. This marked a decisive stage in the campaign. Thereafter, Firmus was in outright revolt whether he willed it or not and there were no further attempts by the two leaders to negotiate.⁴⁸

The remainder of Ammianus' record focuses on Theodosius' struggle to overcome Firmus' tribal allies. Here again there are further contradictions. The *Mazices*, a *bellicosum genus et durum*, were ranged alongside Firmus at the beginning of the campaign. Yet later on, after the tribe had been defeated, pardoned and the Firman party within its collective leadership had been purged, the tribe contributed a vital contingent to the Roman forces, as noted in section III.2.1. Whilst Theodosius, with a small force of only 3500 men, was engaged in operations against one tribe, the *Musones*, probably in the Ouarsenis or the Dahra, a large opposing confederation was mobilised by Cyria, Firmus sister. The speed of the coalition's formation took the general by surprise and threatened his army with annihilation. It was only the timely appearance of '*Mazicum auxiliis*', complete with a stiffening of regular soldiers, which retrieved the situation.⁴⁹

Theodosius then extricated his army and retired to *Tipasa*. From this secure base he was able to begin undermining the coalition by diplomatic means. By this stage the loyalty of the regional army officer-corps and much of the Moorish nobility was assured. These men, long experienced in tribal negotiations - '*suadendi quosdam peritos*' - could be sent to woo those members of the tribal leadership, who were still in rebellion. Even though his large army was intact and undefeated, Firmus was forced to abandon it and flee south-east because he had lost confidence in his allies, the chieftains at the head of the confederation. It was the decisive point in the struggle, marking as it did the renewed loyalty of the *Mazices* and the breakup of the most formidable tribal coalition to face Theodosius. There was still much hard fighting to follow before all resistance was worn down, but Firmus was never again in a position of such strength. The main task for the Roman army was simply to capture or kill Firmus in order to extinguish his power. In this the conflict follows the pattern of other African wars where the elimination of the charismatic leader - Jugurtha and

48. Firmus furnishes provisions: AM XXIX, v, 15-16. Presumably these supplies were drawn from the resources of his Mitidja estates, which lay along the most direct route from *Tubusuptu* and the valley of the Oued Soumman to *Tipasa*. This road, which passed through the *limes* sector headquarters of *Bida*, was probably that taken by Theodosius' troops.

The plot to 'throw the army into confusion': AM XXIX, v, 19.

49. The confederation: AM XXIX 5, 27-33. A list of the tribes is given at 33, '*Baiuras, Cantaurianos, Avastomates, Cafaves, Bavaresque (or Davares...) et finitimos alios*'. The figure of 3500 men does not indicate the total size of Theodosius field army, simply the size of the force deployed against the *Musones*. It is thus a useful indication of the number of men believed to be necessary to overcome a Mauretanian mountain tribe.

Tacfarinas for example - was vital before peace could be restored.⁵⁰

This final stage of the campaign provides one further, quintessential, example of the intermediary role played Romano-Moorish chieftains, namely the achievements of Masilla. A noble - *optimatus* - of the *Mazices*, Masilla was probably serving in Theodosius' camp as commander of a force of levies from his own tribe, the *Mazicum auxiliis* noted above. It was Masilla who, crucially, brokered the negotiations between Theodosius and Igmazen, king of the *Isaflenses*, during the final stages of the war. Masilla's word was trusted both by the imperial authorities and by Igmazen himself. He was thus able to serve as an interpreter between the king and the general, and was instrumental in bringing the war finally to an end by engineering the suicide of Firmus. To what degree he was acting on Theodosius' orders or on his own initiative in this last matter is open to speculation. The suicide may have been designed to ensure Igmazen was unable to gain too much prestige by handing over the usurper alive but many other interpretations are possible.⁵¹

VIII.5.3 Conclusion

The foregoing section is not intended to deny the reality of the revolt, but it is important simply to emphasise the complexities of the issue.

A number of important conclusions, with regard to the conflicting questions of resistance to or participation in imperial rule, emerge from the above analysis.

Firstly, by rewarding conspicuous loyalty the imperial government had, inadvertently, fostered a dangerous concentration of power. The structural barriers within Berber society and politics, notably the vigorous competition amongst the chieftains, which operated to preserve a balance of power between different members of the tribal elite, had been surmounted by Saturninus' and Nubel's line over several generations. These 'intermediary' magnates possessed a combination of political, economic and military strength, within their region, which was unparalleled amongst the Later Roman aristocracy outside Africa.

Secondly, the revolt appears to have broken out, essentially, because of a dispute over succession after Nubel's death.

Firmus' revolt was unlike earlier tribal revolts and perhaps more dangerous, not because the tribes were utterly divided from and hostile to the civilised world of the cities, but precisely because of the extent to which tribal society was integrated into wider provincial life, whilst still retaining its distinctive kinship structure and warrior culture. It may

50. AM XXIX, v, 31-35.

51. For Masilla see AM XXIX, v, 51, 54-55.

be the case that a revolt of this character could only occur at this particular stage in relationship between Moorish tribes and the imperial state. Earlier, when tribes were less assimilated, the integrity of the local garrison army and the loyalty of the region's municipal elite was not compromised. Conversely, when assimilation reached a more advanced stage, tribes posed less of a threat as their elan and warrior ethos was eroded.⁵²

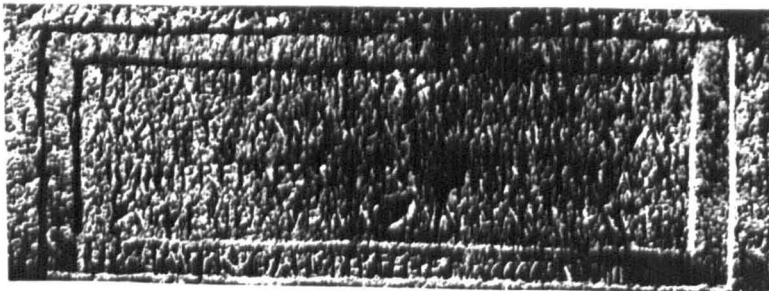
Finally, for every Firmus there was a Gildo, for every Fericius, a Masilla. The revolt did not mark the end of the 'chieftain intermediary' figure nor did it terminate the participation of tribesmen in the imperial hierarchy. Quite the reverse. From Nubel's own lineage, Gildo was to rise to the highest military command in the region. When Gildo, himself, came into conflict with the Western generalissimo, Stilicho, it was yet another of Firmus' 'brothers', Mascezel, who was to effect Gildo's downfall. It would be facile to portray such activity as collaboration. It is the ancient world, which these events take place in, not the era of the nation state. It was to relatively small political entities, one's city, tribe or lineage, that the strongest loyalty was given, rather than to some vague concept of African nationhood. Thus it could be argued that Masilla displayed did greater loyalty to his community, the *Mazices*, than Firmus' allies, Bellen and Fericius, or at any rate exercised better judgement in safeguarding its interests. In making such judgements it was up to each individual of authority or influence to negotiate the turbulent currents of tribal politics and avoid the rock of imperial might, as best he or she could. Thus, it is not so difficult to perceive how Mascezel might move from the camp of 'resistance' to that of 'collaboration'.

These figures are not only important for our understanding of tribal assimilation and municipalisation in North Africa. They are also relevant to the question of the emergence of the Moorish kingdoms in the fifth century, following the Vandal conquest. Were the new kings the successors of Nubel, building statelets on the foundations of their networks of patronage and their military prestige, seizing the opportunity provided by the decline of the Vandal *makhzen*? This cycle of development, chief - magnate - king, is favoured by Camps (1984), but Février (1988) has argued persuasively to the contrary. Men like Nubel rose because of their ability to act as power-brokers between a powerful imperial government and the tribal world. As the strength of the *makhzen* ebbed so too did that of their erstwhile agents, deprived of their former role. The new Moorish kings, like Masuna, *rex gentium Maurorum et Romanorum*, he suggests, were the descendants of federate chieftains, who had once ensconced beyond the provincial limits.

52. The extensive private land-holdings of magnates like Firmus may have had a corrosive impact on tribal structure. In other words, like the law of 409, these figures mark the continued erosion of tribal society as much as its continued survival. See Mattingly 1987, 85 & 90 for the increasingly seigniorial character of the Later Romano-African tribal elite.

King Masuna at Altava

PRO S A L • E T I N C O L • R E • M A S V N A E G E N T •
M A V R • E T R O M A N O R • C A S T R V M E D I F I C • A • M S
G I V I N I P R E F • D E S A F A R • I I D E R P R O C • C A S T
R A S E V E R I A Q V E M M S V N A A L T A V A P O S V • I T
E T M X I M • P R O C • A L T • P E R F E C • P P • C C C C L X V I I I I



(after Camps 1984)

In any case, even if 'intermediary chieftain lineages' of the fourth century did evolve into royal lines in the sixth century, such a development was by no means inevitable. The chaos of the fifth century - the Vandal invasion, the prolonged warfare between Vandal and Roman forces and the final Vandal conquest - inevitably had a damaging impact on the prestige of central government - whether controlled by Roman or Vandal. Subsequently, the military attention of the new Vandal rulers was focussed on the opportunities for expansion in the Mediterranean basin, and later on increasingly desperate manoeuvring to avoid East Roman annexation. It would not be surprising if chieftains of all kinds sought to fill the resultant power-vacuum in the former frontier zone.

CHAPTER IX

BERBER TRIBAL SOCIETY AND THE LATER ROMAN ARMY

It is now time to draw these strands together and assess what their implications are for our understanding of frontier society of Later Roman Africa, and in particular its two main protagonists.

IX.1 FRONTIER GUARDS

IX.1.1 The limitanei

A firm answer was given to the central question posed in the opening chapter. There is clear evidence for the presence of regular soldiers in the frontier zone, under the command of *praepositi limitum*. It was these troops - eventually dubbed *limitanei* - who bore the main responsibility for guarding the frontiers of the African diocese, not the tribal militia (*gentiles*) suggested by A.H.M. Jones. Over time the *limitanei* probably declined in strength, their place effectively being taken by the regional field army whose development was analysed in Chapter V. It is obvious that the large force of *comitatenses*, listed in the *Notitia* was not introduced into the region in a single measure at the beginning of the period. It grew steadily, probably absorbing more and more of the region's military resources, as the fourth century progressed. However, *limitanei* still existed in the early fifth century - being alluded to both by the *Notitia*, and St Augustine - providing local policing in the frontier zone and in the mountains of *Caesariensis*. They guarded roads and chased brigands, manned the linear barriers and monitored movement, notably that of transhumant tribesmen; in other words they were the '*vigilias et praetenturas*', as Ammianus (XXIX v 5) neatly puts it.

Two pieces of evidence which appeared to support the concept of a tribal militia were shown to have very different explanations. Firstly, the existence of a system of localised area frontier commands, entrusted to *praepositi limitum*, which is unparalleled in other regions of the Empire, has created a misleading impression that the African garrison was radically different from that on other frontiers. In fact the origins of this peculiar command structure can be traced back to the early third century, when individual regimental *praepositi* are already to be found supervising troops in numerous fortlets and outposts, scattered across wide tracts of the pre-desert frontier zone. To man these far flung police stations, given the small size of the army garrisoning the North African provinces, the officers acquired an assortment of detachments and composite units (*numeri collati*), in addition to their principal regiment. Eventually these territorial responsibilities were given official recognition, the title *praepositus limitis* being allocated to local commanders during Diocletian's far-reaching administrative reforms.

IX.1.2 The gentiles

A second piece of evidence, the well-known edict of the early fifth century, *CTh* VII xv 1, does relate to the involvement of tribesmen in frontier security. The law states that *gentiles* had traditionally been responsible for maintaining the military structures associated with the frontier commands, most notably the *fossatum* (*curam fossati*), and had performed an ill-defined defensive (?) role (*munitionem/tuitionem limitis*) perhaps entailing the reinforcement of frontier commands during a crisis. In other words the *gentiles* fulfilled a role supplementary to that of the *limitanei* and were not a substitute for the latter. After 409 these obligations were dependent on the ownership of designated tracts of land rather than personal membership of a *gens*, at any rate in the particular districts concerned by the edict.

Gentiles were simply members of Berber tribes incorporated within the African diocese. The continued existence of such tribal society in the Later Roman period is attested throughout the frontier provinces, particularly in the Mauretaniae. Government use of these tribesmen as irregular auxiliaries is clearly referred in literary sources, notably Ammianus Marcellinus, and echoed by several inscriptions. Temporary military service of this kind probably explains the presence of 'a great man and eminent soldier' amongst the 'chiefs of administration and justice' commemorated at Bir ed-Dreder, and the official favour accorded to Moorish magnates like Nubel and Sammac. There is also tentative epigraphic confirmation that chieftains took responsibility for the construction and repair of official fortifications. This integration of African tribal communities into the imperial state's military resources can be traced right back through the Roman period to the indigenous African kingdoms. Indeed, it is evidently the characteristic structural relationship in the Maghreb between central states and perimeter or encapsulated tribes.¹

It should be stressed that these provincial *gentes* were an integral part of Late Romano-African world. They may have had preserved different obligations towards the imperial state, as compared with urban communities, but they nevertheless had full Roman citizenship. I do not believe there was an *Afrique oubliée* or *abandonnée*, rather, as Février (1986A, 798) has more wittily put it, it is Africa which has been abandoned by the archaeologists. The continued survival of tribal society in the mountains and the pre-desert was not the result of Roman failure to penetrate and subjugate those regions. It simply reflects the difficulty communities in such areas had in evolving into *civitates*, a difficulty which was largely related to topography and restricted economic resources. At favourable locations, for example in large oases, cities did

1. The epitaph of Iulius Nasif, *tribunus bal sem rm sabsi* - 'great man and eminent soldier'. The translation is that of Elmayor 1983, 88-89, cf. *IRT* 886f = Goodchild 1954, 103 = 1976, 64 (nr.6) & 67 (fig.24).

develop. The farms, villas and villages on tribal and city territories differ remarkably little. Romanised settlement reaches far up into the hills, being found in the heart of the Aurès, that supposed bastion of tribal resistance. Nor were the massifs of Mauretania turned into 'reserves' into which the tribes were shut, *quadrillè* by military roads and 'limites', to protect 'Roman' cities in the foothills and the plains. Banditry, prevalent in the mountains for doubtless much the same topographical and economic reasons as tribalism, was countered by military commands which covered - not encircled - those regions, and which were based in major communications nodes such as *Tubusuctu* and *Auzia*. Thus government control was exercised everywhere within the provincial boundaries, although greater effort was required in some areas than others. Provincial *gentiles* were subject to normal judicial authority, just like other citizens of the North African provinces, as illustrated by *CTh* XI xxx 62, of 405, regulating appellate jurisdiction in cases involving tribesmen and tribal prefects. In fact, it is increasing tribal participation in the wider Late Roman world, which is so crucial in explaining events such as the revolt of Firmus and the rise of Gildo.

IX.2 THE FRONTIER

IX.2.1 'Lines', roads and barriers

The imperial 'frontier' which the *limitanei* guarded was not defined by linear barriers, still less by roads. Linear barriers there were in the frontier zone, but these were devices to control movement, not boundary markers (except in the most symbolic sense). Their location was determined by topographical factors, the need to prevent infiltration in certain types of terrain, or the existence of ranges or scarps which could be used as extensive control barriers, with the addition of a few valley blocking walls. These structures may be envisaged as checkpoints of the sort erected by modern police forces and customs agents. Their purpose was to ensure the recognition of imperial authority on the part of transhumant groups entering the provinces, by enabling officers to make face to face contact with nomad chieftains.

'Frontier roads', on the other hand, neither delineated the limits of the province nor served as barriers. Studded with forts and minor posts, they do present the appearance, on a map, of a protective girdle around the provinces. However, this is misleading. They often consist of many disparate elements, including lines of advance. Their prime role was always communications, linking centres in the frontier zone which the government wished to control or protect, and which could in turn form bases for operation throughout a much wider area. They did not serve as lines of control on the ground, rigorously patrolled to ensure no one crossed them. Minor fortifications along routes were probably intended to protect the road itself and those using it, not to turn the highway into a barrier. Given the vast distances and small numbers of Roman troops involved in North Africa, any attempt to hold a

preclusive line on the ground would surely have been doomed, and was probably never attempted.

IX.2.2 The frontier and its peoples

Instead, the frontier was a human one, defined by the type of relationship which different groups within the marches had with the imperial state. On the one hand there were the directly administered communities - both tribal and urban - of the provinces. Following the *Constitutio Antoniniana* these would all have been covered by Roman citizenship. Next there were peoples with client or federate agreements. Most of these would have been Berber tribes, but some settlements with considerable urban character, such as Ghadames, Bu Ngem and perhaps Gahra may have fallen into this category. Finally there were tribes independent of any sort of imperial authority or influence. The territorial limits of the perimeter provincial communities determined the course of the imperial frontier in its narrower sense, but the Empire also claimed authority over its clients (irrespective of whether or not that hegemony was either effective or even acknowledged).²

In practice the territorial boundaries between these various groups and hence the limits of the Empire itself were doubtless quite irregular and in many areas diffuse. Much of the frontier zone was arid steppe, used only as seasonal grazing by transhumant tribes. Sedentary settlements located within the region each possessed an obvious core of agricultural land - oasis, wadi bed, terraced hillslopes and the like - which could be assessed and taxed. However, even these communities might have extensive surrounding pasture delimited, only vaguely, by notable topographical features. Furthermore, grazing rights over such pasture might be shared with other groups, both sedentary and nomadic, provincial and independent. Military roads may, over time, have been adopted as convenient delimiting features between different groups, but that does not imply that they were intended for such use at their inception. In such circumstances, it is more likely that the imperial administration conceived of the frontier in terms of a perimeter of communities subject to their authority, juxtaposed against those which were not, rather than as a precise territorial limit.³

2. Universal citizenship: the outlandish nature of Moorish nomenclature should not obscure this, indeed it is probably because citizenship was universal that there was little remaining value in the Romanisation of names to demonstrate citizen status. In any case, is the survival of names like Nubel, Gildo and Maserel, alongside Latinised examples such as Firmus and Saturninus, any more significant than the continued use of Apion by landowners in Egypt or Syagrius by members of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy?

3. An interesting comparable case on another desert frontier, is cited by Liebeschuetz 1977, 489 and Isaac 1990, 211 & 244-245. In 540 a dispute arose between the Arab clients of the Roman and Persian Empires, over the ownership of grazing land near Palmyra. Arethas, the Ghassanid chieftain, claimed the land was Roman because of the name, 'Strata' applied to it by everyone. This is of course a reference to the Diocletianic military road, the *strata Diocletiana*, running from south from Palmyra. It is significant that no one suggested that the line of the road itself marked the limits of the Roman Empire. The road had given its name to the surrounding district, and it was the fact that the area had an obviously Latin name (or conceivably that it had characteristically Roman road running through it) that demonstrated it lay within the domain of Rome. Cf. Procopius II i 3 ff.

IX.3 A MARCHER SOCIETY?

In one respect this perimeter increasingly marked a cultural divide as well as a jurisdictional limit. The differing religious allegiances on either side of the frontier (see VII.6.3 & VIII.3.2), are clearly revealed by the letters of Augustine. He notes the adoption of Christianity on the part of tribes which had recently submitted to imperial authority, whilst a correspondent refers to the persistence of paganism amongst barbarian transhumants entering the Tripolitanian frontier zone. The divide was thus not one between civic communities and tribal groups. Provincial chieftains were increasingly drawn into the wider milieu of the Later Roman aristocracy. They acquired honorary titles, such as *comes* and *vir perfectissimus*, commanded *limites* or field army regiments, built churches and constructed elaborate fortified residences just like the municipal elite in the frontier zone.

Some, notably Nubel and his kinsmen, achieved great power, based on their ability to operate in two worlds, that of the African tribe and the wider one of imperial administration, and their willingness to act as an intermediary between the two. By putting their political and military resources to work for Rome's benefit these chieftains gained favour with the military authorities and commensurate rewards. The land, titles and offices thereby obtained in turn provided the wherewithal for enhanced prestige and leverage within tribal society.

Chieftains had long been used by Rome as intermediaries to control tribal society, but they had rarely achieved any prominence prior to the fourth century. Their emergence in the historical and epigraphic sources has been portrayed as a reflection of declining imperial authority, which in turn fostered a resurgence of tribal social organisation. I have argued that tribes persisted right through the imperial era in many regions. The increasing participation of the Berber chieftains in the wider administrative and political life of the region can be seen as a positive indication of continued imperial vitality. The tribal aristocracy was sufficiently assimilated to be trusted with complete responsibility for the local government of their communities, a stage symbolised by the change in composition of *praefecti gentium*. In other words, the provincial tribes were now on a similar footing to that of the cities.

The initiative for the award of both offices and titles probably came in the main from the chieftains themselves rather than the government. This certainly was the pattern elsewhere in the Empire. The literary and documentary sources suggest that the government was besieged by petitioners seeking to add a handle to their name. Clearly the aristocracy of Late Antiquity considered honorary titles and official posts to be the surest methods to gain status and prestige. Thus there is little need to assume that the *honores* and *administrationes* held by the tribal nobility were

mere bribes or sinecures, bestowed in the hope of ensuring loyalty in the absence of any real imperial authority.⁴

Février (1988, 147) envisages the limits of the Empire not as true frontiers but rather as 'marches', '*qui sont autant de réservoirs de travailleurs que de soldats*'. The marches can be characterised as a region of interface between contrasting groups - tribes and cities, nomads and farmers, soldiers and civilians, federates and provincials. Thus the frontier zone retained a distinct identity, despite the increasing integration of the zone's provincial communities into the political and social life of the Empire. This identity is particularly clear in Tripolitania where Arzugitana, the provincial frontier zone, is distinguished in late sources from Subventana, the coastal urbanised region, and the Arzuges are in opposition to the hostile *Austuriani* confederation, further south. The emblematic label, *Arzuges*, was perhaps initially coined in the third century to designate the peoples of the Tripolitanian interior, subject to the military administration of the legate rather than the civil government of the proconsul. Its appearance marks one important stage in the evolution of a well-defined borderland and a frontier society.⁵

IX.4 SOLDIERS AND TRIBESMEN

Finally, we may return to the title of this study, soldiers and tribesmen. The phrase is of course ambiguous. On the one hand it denotes the two principal adversaries in frontier warfare. It also defines two of the principal groups to be found in the frontier provinces of Roman Africa. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the third possible sense of the phrase, one implied in Février's observations cited above, namely the way in which frontier tribes acted as a reservoir of potential soldiers. Indeed, military service, whether as regular *milites* or irregular auxiliaries, is one of the hallmarks of the frontier zone society referred to above.

Thus far the respective security roles of army units and tribes have been carefully distinguished. Social groups of course can be treated in this manner, their separate duties towards the state defined and summarised, but the individual soldiers and tribesmen themselves cannot be so neatly divided into mutually exclusive categories.

This is particularly the case with members of the tribal aristocracy, as was stressed in the previous chapter. The position of figures such as Caletamera, Masties, or the *p(rae)p(ositus)* Maximianus, known only from inscriptions, is difficult to determine because of the very duality of frontier society. They could plausibly have fulfilled the roles of either chieftain or regular officer, and may in fact have discharged both. Moorish *gentes* certainly produced imperial

4. Jones *LRE*, 383-390 & 543-545.

5. By comparison, Liebeschuetz 1990, 22 (with bibliography in n.91) notes the existence of a 'frontier civilisation', on either side of Rome's European frontier.

officers, exemplified most conspicuously by Flavius Nuvel and the *comes et magister utriusque militiae*, Gildo, leading to a considerable overlap between the region's military hierarchy and its tribal elite of chieftains and elders.

Berbers of course also figured prominently in the ranks, despite the scholarly emphasis on the Germanisation of the Later Roman army. There is good reason to believe that the manpower of the local *limitanei* was largely provided by recruits drawn from the African marches. To a lesser extent the same was probably true of the regional field army. The steady trickle of regiments arriving from overseas throughout the fourth century, fuelling the growth of that force, would have periodically renewed the 'foreign' element within the African army. Nevertheless there was probably a marked Berber flavour to the regional field army, each newly arrived *numerus* settling down in turn and beginning to draw on local sources of manpower, through conscription, compulsory hereditary service and volunteers.

The conduct of the *Constantiani pedites* and the *equites quarto-sagittarii* during Firmus' revolt provides the strongest confirmation of service by Moorish tribesmen in African field units. It also symbolises the duality of frontier society and the confusion of loyalty that might result. However, this crisis was the an extreme case. Even so the bulk of the regional army remained faithful to imperial authority. The later revolt of Gildo was very different in character, fitting into ^{the} common pattern of those initiated by ambitious generals seeking advancement. His troops and tribal levies followed as they might any such commander. The utter collapse of Gildo's cause, when confronted by a small expeditionary corps, representing the forces of legitimacy, demonstrates he had no special hold on the loyalty of the African *gentiles*.

In fact Moorish troops had been instrumental in ensuring the very survival of the Empire during the crises of the third century. That this contribution to the military forces of the Empire was well recognised in the region is implied by the testimony of one Victor, a Latin grammarian at Cirta, regarding his own origin. His statement is quoted by Jones (*LRE*, 53):

I am a professor of Latin literature, a Latin grammarian..... My father was a decurion of Constantina [Cirta], my grandfather a soldier; he had served in the *comitatus*, for our family is of Moorish origin.⁶

Victor was being interrogated by the Numidian *consularis*, Zenophilus, during investigation into the Donatists in 320. It is difficult to envisage a more extreme indication of cultural assimilation than the teaching of Latin literature and grammar. Clearly, individual Moors or Libyans and their descendants were no less able to absorb 'Roman' culture than any other inhabitants of the Empire.

6. The statement is contained in one of the documents (Appendix I - *Gesta apud Zenophilum*) preserved by Optatus of Milev, in his polemic against the Donatists.

The attraction of military service for ambitious men from tribal backgrounds is readily explained. Chieftains probably found it difficult to compete with their counterparts in the urban elite for posts in the imperial civil administration, since they lacked the essential training in bureaucratic administration which the civic magistracies provided. That left the army as the main, if not the only, avenue by which they might attain rank and privilege. For *gentiles* of lesser social standing and ambition, the army offered a more secure existence than that provided by their native mountains, steppes or wadis, with good pay and provisions, and the chance of a windfall of campaign booty.

Hence, the label 'soldier and tribesman', an apparent oxymoron, neatly describes many individuals serving in the African forces during the Later Roman era. It is unlikely they would have been conscious of any contradiction. For the army and the *gentiles* did not belong to two separate worlds - a governed, Romanised Africa and an '*Afrique oubliée*', rather they were simply different, overlapping facets of a single frontier society.